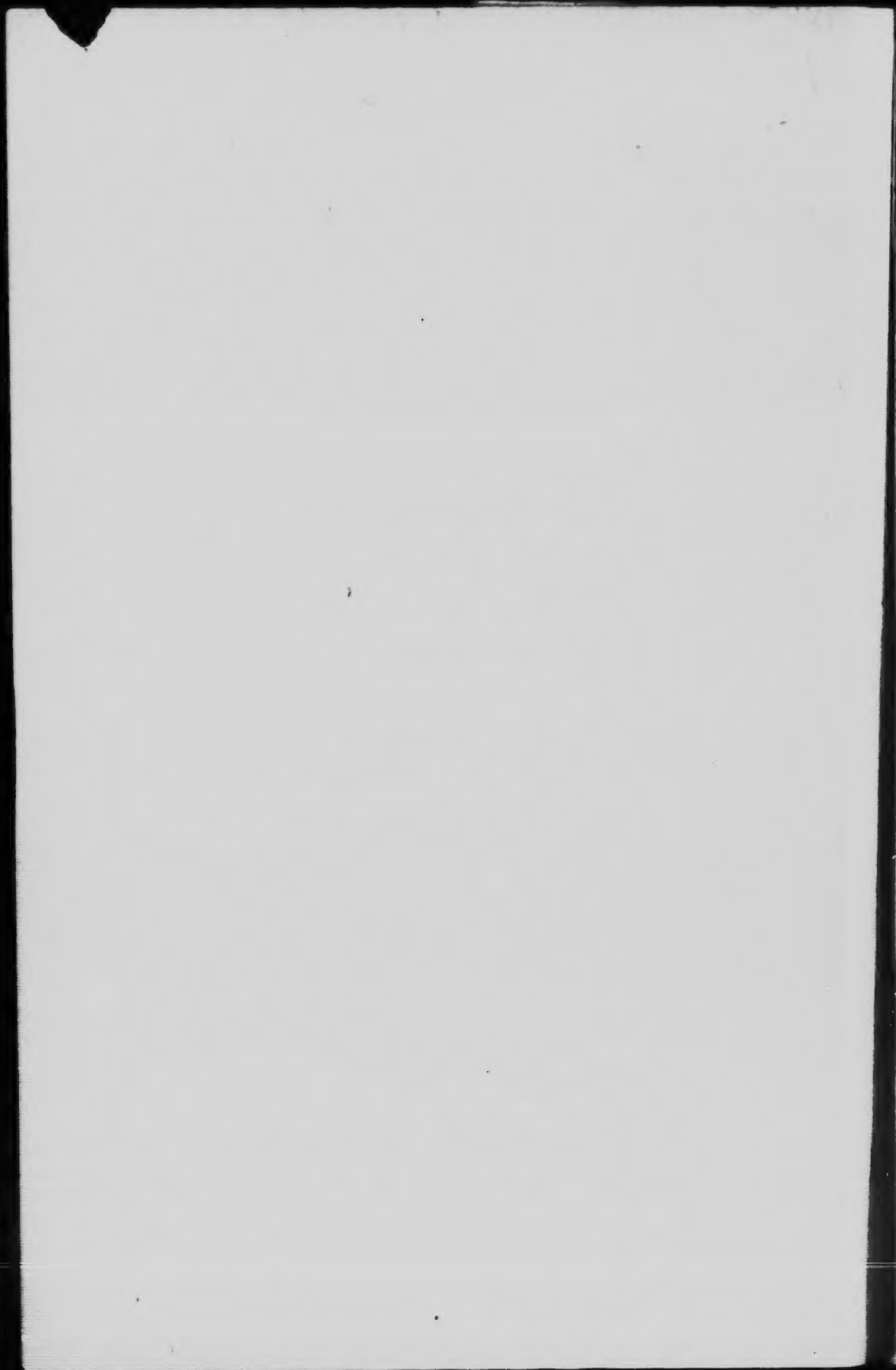


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HAROLD BOWDOIN'S INVESTMENT

BY
HATTIE E. COLTER

TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS

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PREFACE

THE young people in Great Britain who may read this story have possibly never heard of the Province of New Brunswick. If they look at the map of Canada, they will find on its eastern slope a square section, divided from its sister provinces by a band of water on two sides, and on the third by a line visible on the map, but otherwise imaginary. Canada has two large front doors on her eastern shore—Halifax, the capital of the Province of Nova Scotia, and St. John, the largest town in New Brunswick, situated on the Bay of Fundy, which all boys and girls the world over who are well up in the geography of this planet must remember, because of its famous tides.

New Brunswick is practically unknown in literature, save for a brief history, incorporated with that of Canada, for use in schools, and a few mediocre fragments of poetry and fiction, and yet it is the scene of triumph and defeat in common with every other portion of the world. From its quiet country

lanes and humble farmhouses have gone forth youths who have stood before kings and won honour for themselves and their country.

Strange as it may seem, it is the farmers' sons in this land who have taken the prizes in whatever field they have competed. How many a story might be told of the noble endurance and unfaltering courage of both parent and child in the weather-beaten farmhouses scattered throughout New Brunswick; of their struggle with poverty, and the ultimate triumph of the bright lad who won an education and subsequent honours that were never dreamed of when the struggle with unfriendly circumstances was being waged!

The free-school system of the province has been pronounced by experts the best in the world. This has had much to do with the intellectual development of the young people. From the humblest homes there come, year after year, students to our Normal Training School for Teachers, very often compassing this final effort on borrowed capital. In a few years, through money earned by teaching, they take a university course at one or other of our provincial colleges, in very many instances taking the post-graduate course at Harvard or some other American university later on, and after that becoming absorbed in the life of the Republic. The fact that they are Donen rasters, as the maritime

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people are designated, is a strong factor in their advancement with the Americans. They find our people not wanting where physical endurance is required; and as this is a prime requisite in every form of strenuous life, our day-labourers, artisans, and brain workers find the neighbouring republic a good market wherein to invest capital, whether of brain or brawn.

This story has to do mainly with one of these country lads and how he came into his kingdom.

HATTIE E. COLTER.



CHAPTER I

OVERLOOKED

HAROLD BOWDOIN walked thoughtfully down one of the steep streets towards the harbour on his way to church. His thoughts were very fully occupied with the work he had to do, but he paused to take in the superb view stretching away to the horizon. He was on his way to the Young People's Meeting, and was appointed to lead it that evening for the first time. He had made careful preparation, and, following Dr. Barrow's example, was taking voluminous notes between the leaves of his Bible. He had looked forward to this hour with much trepidation. Careful preparation had been made, and, as he was a general favourite with the young people, a larger number than usual were present. The meeting was pronounced a success, and congratulations were hearty as the youthful leader stepped down among his associates. It was a usual occurrence to have strangers present, and this evening a plainly dressed youth sat through the meeting near the door. After the meeting had been dismissed he still lingered, gazing wistfully at the young people who appeared

to be on such cordial terms with each other. He had been an attendant at the church for some months, but no one save the sexton had spoken to him save with a "How-do-you-do?" and formal handshake. That evening he left the church with a deeper sense of lonely isolation than usual, and started for the dreary room that he called home. He had not gone far when a young man joined him.

"The sexton just now asked me to speak to you," he said. "He tells me you have been coming to our church for some time, and no one seems to notice you."

"He is the only one who has talked with me."

"That is too bad; but let me assure you it has not been intentional, but just an oversight."

"I made up my mind this evening to go to some other church, or else stay at home."

"Oh, you must not do that! Try us once more."

"I am afraid your church folk judge me by my garments; they are very shabby, I must confess." He glanced scrutinisingly at his coat and said, after a moment's pause, "I shall get a new suit before very long. I had to remember them at home first; their necessity was greater than mine."

"You have judged us too harshly."

"I hope you are right. My mother has a high opinion of Church members. When I left home she asked me to promise her to choose my friends in the prayer meeting. She said there might be a Judas there, as there was among Christ's own followers, but the proportion of Judases was far smaller in the Church than anywhere else."

"Give us another trial. You have taught me a

lesson, and I shall pass your words on to the rest of our young people."

"Yes, I will come again. It gave me a lonely feeling to think I must live here without friends. One likes to have some one to speak to now and then. I shall know better what prison life must be like, where conversation is forbidden."

"You shall have friends enough after this. God forgive us for our negligence to the stranger!"

"I have had to ask Him to forgive me for the hard thoughts that have come to me over and over again in your church."

He evidently found it hard to express himself. His words seemed disjointed, and his voice was tremulous.

"I am some years older than you are, but not too old to be your friend, and there are others nearer your own age who will be worthy of your friendship. May I ask your name?"

"Ferdinand Lee."

"Where do you board?"

"At Kelley's, in Water Street."

"I do not know the place."

"It is a poor place. I was told that it is the cheapest boarding-house in town, but I could have got on somehow only that I was so dreadfully lonesome. You are the first person I have talked to since I came here, only so far as asking or answering a question may be excepted."

"We must look you up a better place; and now I will say good-night; but first I must tell you my name. My friends all call me Jimmie Wilson; there

are others of the same name, and that is the way they distinguish me from the rest."

The kindly look upon Wilson's face as he shook hands at parting sent Lee to his cheerless room with a happier heart than he had known for a long time. He would be stronger now to resist the overtures of his fellow-boarders, who were only too willing to introduce him to the shady side of city life.

Wilson turned, after he had said good-night to young Lee, and retraced his steps to the Bowdoin mansion. Harold Bowdoin's address that night was founded on the text, "Therefore, whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them." His central thought was to put yourself in the other's place, when that other had a harder life than yours. Jimmie Wilson wisely concluded that now was the time for the lad to put his theories into practice. The Bowdoin mansion was perhaps the finest in the city, and its owner one of the wealthiest men in the country, while Harold was an only child with a larger allowance of pocket money than was really safe to entrust to a youth still in his teens. When Wilson was ushered into the parlour he found Harold talking over the meeting with his mother, and evidently in the mood to enter heartily into any good work that might be suggested.

"Did you see that pale-faced lad sitting by himself on one of the back seats to-night?" Wilson asked—after the meeting, and Harold's part in it, had been satisfactorily discussed.

"Yes, I noticed what an interested listener he appeared to be; I believe he helped me more than

any one there, especially when I was talking about our duty to those not so well placed in the world as we are."

"I am afraid he thinks we are better at talking than doing."

"How is that?"

Wilson repeated his conversation with Lee.

"And he boards at Kelley's, and has no friends. Mother, what if that were your boy?"

"It would nearly break my heart, if I were powerless to help you."

"He has a mother," Wilson said, "and for her sake stays alone four evenings in the week in that stuffy house; he comes to our church the other three evenings, and, judging from his words, I do not think he finds it much improvement on Kelley's."

"I will visit him to-morrow evening," said Harold.

"Then I shall go home satisfied," Wilson said, with one of his rare smiles, as he bade good-night.

Alone with his mother Harold discussed the case.

"I wish it wasn't so easy to forget about others. Probably there are a good many beside Ferdinand Lee who think that we have our religion just for our own enjoyment. Our crowd seems to be sufficient unto itself, without strangers intruding; I never realised how selfish we were before."

"It is a discipline that you require, and there is all the more need when the stranger comes in humble guise. To deny oneself is one of the helps in character-building, which God puts early within our reach," his mother said, as she kissed him good-night.

After he reached his room Harold counted his

bank stock. From a little lad his mother had encouraged him to put a portion of his allowance in the bank each month, while a strict account was kept of every penny he expended ; she hoped in this way to train him to careful business habits. The perusal of his bank-book evidently did not give him satisfaction, for he studied it with a clouded face. So many items were recorded that meant a growing self-indulgence. "I call myself a follower of Christ, even going so far as to lead a meeting, and yet I don't do half as well with my money as a young Jew would have done three thousand years ago." He voiced his thoughts aloud as he dropped his bank-book into a writing desk, and turned the key. "Mother will advance me a few dollars if I promise amendment," he said with a sigh, and then prepared for bed.

The following evening he started for Kelley's boarding-house in Water Street ; he knew the locality, but his feet had never crossed the threshold of such an unsavoury abode. A slatternly maid led the way up three flights of dirty and ill-lighted stairs : the top flat looked even more forlorn than the rest of the house. Every vile odour pervading the premises seemed to have accumulated there, while disorder ran riot in the rooms through whose open doors he took hasty glances as he followed the girl.

"Lee's room is in there ; he's an awful stiddy fellow, more like a preacher than a factory hand." The girl was quite willing to converse if the slightest encouragement were given. She stood waiting after she had tried the door, which, finding locked, she

rapped loudly for admittance. There was no response when she called, "You'd better open, for it's a nice young gentleman what's never been here before." There was a movement within, and presently the key was turned. At sight of Harold a warm flush spread over the thin face, which the girl mistook for shame, until she saw the look of welcome in his eyes. She lingered outside, her ear as close to the keyhole as she could get it, but a peremptory call from the lower regions forced her reluctantly away. Harold cast a hasty glance around the room. It was only about eight feet square, its furniture consisting of a bed with soiled counterpane and pillow-case, an unpainted washstand with cracked basin, and pitcher minus a handle, one cane-seated chair in a dilapidated condition, and a small cracked looking-glass. In one corner there stood a trunk with the young man's slender wardrobe hanging above it.

Harold plunged at once into the business that had brought him there.

"I noticed you at meeting last night, but I never once thought of speaking until Jimmie Wilson told me about you. You will think us a very selfish lot of young folk, I fear."

"I had a few hard thoughts when I saw you all so friendly with each other. I was so lonely, a few drops from your overflow of friendliness would have been grateful to me," replied Lee.

"I hope we shan't again be guilty of offence. Say do you sit in this hot room all the evening?"

"Yes, except when I go to meeting two nights in the week. I spend most of the day there on Sunday

I go to the ten o'clock prayer meeting, the morning preaching service, Sunday School, and then again to the service at night. If I only had some one to speak to, I would be glad when Sunday comes; but they have put me in with a pretty rough class of boys in the Sunday School; they are so restless, the teacher can't do much in the way of teaching, it keeps him busy trying to make them behave. I wanted to get in with better behaved boys, but they judged my character probably by my coat. I noticed the members of our class wear shabby garments."

"I will ask to have you come with me. I am in Jimmie Wilson's class; he is a splendid teacher; nearly all his boys have joined the Church."

Ferdinand cast a critical glance at his wardrobe.

"Those are my best clothes hanging up there; I might be too shabby to go so far up in the school as your class."

"I hope we are not such prigs as to judge one by the coat he wears. Are you a Church member?"

"Yes, indeed. You would not find me staying in this hot, dirty room with no companions, if I were not trying to be a Christian. I have thought lately that Christians are not so keen to look after each other as sinners; I have had hard work to keep clear of the fellows in the factory."

"Have you been to the Y.M.C.A.?"

"No, I can't afford to belong."

"Won't you come out for a walk?"

Harold was getting nervous: insects were increasing in numbers, while the air was getting oppressive.

Ferdinand's face brightened.

"I will be very glad to go out with you. I have been afraid to venture out alone except to church, for then I could tell the boys I was engaged. But other nights it would be different, and sometimes I am so lonesome I am afraid to trust myself."

Harold groaned audibly; such desolateness for a young fellow like Ferdinand was dreadful. As they emerged from the house he said—

"This is such a poor place, I would not board here if I were you."

"The board is cheap, and I am able to save a dollar a week between this and a respectable place; that means a good deal to mother and the family."

"Oh, a dollar. I spend more than that every week for cream candy, and it is an injury to me once it is swallowed."

Ferdinand bent on him a keen look of surprise, not unmingled with contempt. Such wastefulness was well-nigh inconceivable to one who had not spent that sum on confectionery in his whole life. They met some of the factory boys as they emerged from Water Street. "I guess we're getting into swell society," he heard one of them mutter.

Having reached the more respectable streets, Ferdinand wondered if Harold might not be ashamed of his shabby companion, since every few moments he touched his hat to an acquaintance. At last they halted before a brown stone house in one of the principal streets.

"I want you to come in and become acquainted with my mother; I think she is the grandest woman

in the world, and I suppose you think the same of yours," Harold said.

"I have the best of reasons for knowing that she is," was the reply, given with an air of perfect conviction.

When the richly carved door swung behind them, Ferdinand stood amazed as he saw the splendid interior, but Harold seemed in haste.

"Come upstairs. Mother is in the music-room; she is fond of playing in the twilight; I believe it is her favourite hour out of the twenty-four."

Ferdinand thought of his own mother, who was probably in the milking yard at this hour, busily attending the cows.

The delicious strains of music, which he heard as he ascended the polished stairs, brought vividly to his mind memories of the long ago—the hills, and fields, and star-lit heavens, that he had loved from childhood.

"Mother is playing some selections from Schubert; his music makes me feel like crying as mother renders it," Harold whispered, as they halted outside the music-room door.

Ferdinand looked in. The room had a western outlook; the windows were high enough to command a fine view of the sunset; the sky was brilliant with the waste of colouring that Nature uses with such extravagance of beauty at the setting of the sun. Between the great windows, from which the curtains were completely drawn, sat the musician at the instrument. When she had finished playing, Harold, looking in his companion's eyes, saw tears there.

With a hasty movement Ferdinand turned away, but, quickly regaining his self-command, said—

“I wish my mother could have heard that.”

“We will go in now before she begins something. She does not care to be interrupted in the middle of a piece.”

Hearing voices, Mrs. Bowdoin turned. What a splendid-looking woman she was! thought Ferdinand, and so young, seeming more like a sister to the youth, who was evidently proud of her. His own pinched, sad-faced mother, in her shabby home-made gown, came before him for a brief moment; a feeling of strong resentment possessed him as he wondered why God permitted such differences in the bestowment of His gifts. Mrs. Bowdoin was tall and stately, her dress was of some glistening material quite new to Ferdinand, and fell in rich folds on the floor behind her. Her eyes were blue, with long, fringed lashes, her hands was as nearly beautiful as her face, and, whether consciously or not, her gestures were exceedingly graceful. Harold stood beside her; he was tall for eighteen, and could easily press a kiss on the pink cheek. She returned his salutation with a stately grace altogether different from the way Ferdinand's mother would receive a caress from her son, if he had ever thought of bestowing it. Harold presented his friend, and then asked, on behalf of the latter, for more music. His request was immediately granted, since it was the most comfortable way to entertain the shy, country-bred youth, who could have so few thoughts in common with herself. Ferdinand listened breathlessly as he

watched, with deep amazement, the graceful hands so swiftly flitting over the ivory keys. At last she ceased, and, rising, gave her hand graciously to Ferdinand, who scarcely dared touch the beautiful member that drew such marvellously sweet strains from the instrument. Turning to Harold, she said, "You may take your friend to your own room and show him your treasures." He could hardly believe that she meant what she said. How could he, a poor factory hand, and, moreover, a member of the Kelley household, be called the friend of this rich, petted youth? He felt considerably easier when the door had closed between him and this beautiful woman, while it no longer seemed surprising that Harold should fail to notice so shabby a person as himself. Arriving at Harold's room Ferdinand paused amazed.

"This is my room; isn't it jolly?" Harold said, for the first time in his life realising how exceedingly rich his gifts were.

The rich afterglow of the sunset filled the room, lighting up the pictures on the walls, which were more beautiful than any that Ferdinand had ever imagined could be produced by human hands. Books were in evidence everywhere—on bookshelves, tables, and the wide window-seat. There were easy chairs waiting on every side to refresh the youthful master of the room, while other things dear to a boy's heart abounded. Over the picture of a deep, shady pool, where one could be certain the trout were sporting, hung the fishing tackle, which bore evidence of many a long day's sport. There were snow-shoes, guns, tennis rackets, and football equipments. He grew bewildered, and, turning to Harold, said—

"You were good to let me see the inside of your house. I did not know what the world could be like for the rich until this evening."

"And I did not realise what it must be like for one of my own age who had to earn his own living. I would like to share some of my good things with you," replied Harold.

A gleam of rapture came into Ferdinand's eyes as he said: "Would you lend me a few books to read? I have had so little reading matter, and have been hungry for it since I was a little chap."

"You can take home an armful of books if you like, and get hundreds of them as you may want them. What did you do all the evening in your room?"

"I bought a newspaper occasionally, read my Bible, and tried to study a little in my few school books."

Harold, turning to the bookcase, said—

"Come and make your selection. What kind would you like?"

"I have wanted to read some of the great poets."

"Have you never read Milton or Shakespeare?"

"Only some scraps in the school books and the newspapers."

"Then you had better take Shakespeare. I will give you Scott, for fear Shakespeare will be too heavy, and you had better take a good story, for a change when you get tired of poetry."

Ferdinand was busy turning over the leaves of the volume of Shakespeare.

"This will be story enough for me till I get it all read."

"I will see you again soon," Harold said, and he bade Ferdinand goodbye at the door.

CHAPTER II

SELF-DENIAL

THE following morning Harold held a brief conference with his mother at the breakfast table. He had lain awake long enough the previous evening to have his plans made ready for his mother's approval. By paying two dollars a week in addition to what Ferdinand gave the Kelleys, he hoped to secure board for him at Mrs. Gill's, where Jimmie Wilson boarded. She was a Christian gentlewoman, so far reduced in circumstances as to be obliged to take boarders—a circumstance that the young men who found with her a genuine home thought not altogether a misfortune, since she did more good in this way than if she had been in affluence. Mrs. Bowdoin approved of Harold's plans, but was doubtful if Ferdinand would accept so great a favour from a comparative stranger.

"I thought of that, but I will arrange with Mrs. Gill that he is not to know that she charges any more than the Kelleys," said Harold.

"That may be satisfactorily arranged."

"You must remember, mother, the money is to come out of my allowance; it is to be my work, and, if Ferdinand becomes a notable man, I shall have proprietary rights in his success."

The mother smiled tenderly into the face of her idolised boy, wondering if any other mother had such a son as she. His father had been apparently absorbed in his letters; he was a very busy man, senior partner in a successful firm of lawyers, a prominent politician, and chairman of half a dozen different boards, philanthropical and political, so that Harold and his mother were not in the habit of consulting him in the conduct of everyday affairs, while they usually conversed, as on the present occasion, as if they were quite alone; but on this occasion he had been attracted from his letters by the unusual enthusiasm with which Harold had been discussing his new enterprise, and surprised the latter by saying—

"How do you know that this young Lee is worthy of your friendship, or the sacrifice of your pocket money? Has any one recommended him to you?"

"Certainly not, for he is a stranger here, but I know an honest person when I meet one."

"I wish I did," his father said with an expressive gesture.

"It won't hurt me to practise a little self-denial. Are you willing for me to make the experiment?" asked Harold.

"Certainly. I am willing for you to do as you please with your own, but I am desirous that you should be a level-headed business man, as well as a philanthropist, else you may do more harm than

good, beside dissipating the property entrusted to your care."

"If I fail with Ferdinand Lee it will be a lesson to me, but I know he will not be a failure," Harold said eagerly.

"You are deeply smitten by him. I hope to judge for myself before long," was his father's comment.

"May I ask him to tea on Sunday?"

"Certainly, if your mother is willing. I presume he will not be well up in the amenities of civilised life, but we can stand it for once to please you."

"Thank you very much. I am not afraid of my friend trespassing the rules of good breeding. If he were your son I am sure you would be proud of him."

"His eyes are deep and luminous enough for a boy Burns or Tennyson. I was struck with their expression," Mrs. Bowdoin said defensively.

"It was the way he looked at me that inspired me to speak better than I would otherwise have done on Tuesday evening."

"I shall very gladly supply the sinews of war, if only it will develop your oratorical powers, my son."

"You must not make fun of me, father."

A half-hour later Harold was interviewing Mrs. Gill with reference to taking Ferdinand into her family circle. When she found that out of his own allowance Harold was going to pay the difference in price, she generously reduced her terms to meet the exigencies of the case.

"I am afraid you will find him very hungry; he looks half starved," Harold said anxiously.

"His appetite won't impoverish me for a few weeks. We can at least try the experiment," she said with a genial smile.

Harold was very ignorant of the ways and means of boarding-mistresses, and was certainly unwilling that she should be a loser by the undertaking, but he could only wait further developments. He looked forward eagerly for seven o'clock, so anxious was he to take Lee to his new home. At luncheon he said to his mother—

"What will Ferdinand think of the nice dinners, the pleasant company, the clean, pretty house and his own room? Mrs. Gill took me up to see it."

"What is it like?" his mother asked sympathetically.

"It is fair-sized, has a bright rug in the centre, a nice bedroom suite, pictures, a bookshelf, and lace curtains. He will think, after his vile room at the Kelleys', that it is great. I told Mrs. Gill so, and the tears came to her eyes. Some good people cry awfully easy, don't they, mother mine?"

"I can hardly conceive of awfully easy; the two words do not harmonise; but I suppose boys will be boys, and use extravagant phrases to express their ideas."

"I will try to overcome my bad habits of speech, as well as every other kind. Leading that meeting has done me an awful lot of good—there it is again, mother, the word you so much dislike. Say, mustn't it be difficult for people that get converted when they are fifty or sixty years old to get cured of their bad habits, when a youth like me finds it so hard?"

"Yes, my son ; and that shows how wise it is to begin life as we would wish to end it. I can never be thankful enough for the gift of a truly Christian mother. My father, as you know, was rich, and we had many temptations to worldliness. But my mother—if any one ever did it—kept herself unspotted from the world. People used to say her daughters—and she had five of them—would not make good marriage settlements for themselves. A house full of old maids was one of the gloomy outlooks they pictured. But mother kept serene through it all, bearing patiently even with her own children's murmurings because they were denied the pleasures of the card-table and ballroom, with the theatre and other worldly pleasures so dear to the hearts of young people ; but we all married men whom we could respect, and who did not meet us in the mazes of the dance. There was not a poor match among the five of us, as the worldling counts such things."

Harold listened eagerly : his mother had never revealed this beautiful fragment of her early history before. The grey-haired grandmother whom he loved so well, and who through all his childhood had made his summers so happy, suddenly became a heroine in his eyes ; equal, so far as circumstances permitted, to those saints whose painful exit from life had so often distressed him when reading Fox's "Book of Martyrs."

He started for school in a heroic frame of mind, resolving to imitate his gentle-faced grandmother in the ordering of his life. The hours moved slowly that day, but the time came at last.

When he reached Kelley's, he found Ferdinand with the volume of Shakespeare in his hand, deeply absorbed in the affairs of Romeo and Juliet. Harold entered the room, and without waiting to discuss the story, said, "I have something to show you up town."

Ferdinand closed the book reluctantly. "I was going to speak of some of these passages that struck me as being so fine. You have read 'Romeo and Juliet'?" asked he.

"Yes, a part of it, at least."

"I had read extracts before, so last night I took it first. I read till eleven, and was up again at five this morning. Some of it I have learned by heart."

He glanced wistfully over the fascinating pages; nothing Harold could possibly have to exhibit up town could quite equal an hour's discussion over this wonderful story.

On the way to Mrs. Gill's Harold was for the most part silent, while Ferdinand talked about the unhappy differences between the houses of Montague and Capulet, and the misplaced affection of Romeo and Juliet.

Arriving at Mrs. Gill's, Ferdinand followed Harold wonderingly up the two flights of stairs to the room appointed for him. Harold opened the door, and turning to Ferdinand, said, "How do you like this room?"

"Very much; but why do you bring me here?"

"It is to be yours. You will only have to pay the same for this room and board in the house, as for your room and board at Kelley's."

Afterward describing the scene to his mother, Harold said, "You should have seen his eyes—they shone like stars."

"What did he say?"

"He never asked a single troublesome question. We went down to see Mrs. Gill; he did not wait to talk long with her, but started for Kelley's, and in no time had his things packed, and on the way to his new home. I made it all right with the Kelleys by paying them a week in advance. I told him I would explain to them while he was packing, and he does not know that I paid the week's board. It seemed only honest that I should do so."

His mother smiled her approval, pleased that her son had such fine ideas concerning business matters.

"I came back with him to Mrs. Gill's door, and said good-night. I am doubtful if I shall ever be able to give such happiness again."

Mrs. Bowdoin turned to the piano, while Harold threw himself on a sofa, prepared to enjoy for a brief moment the music that seemed so perfectly to harmonise with the gladsome time.

CHAPTER III

NEW ASSOCIATIONS

FERDINAND took his place at the breakfast table the following morning with a measure of shyness. There were six well-dressed young men, five of whom scrutinised the new-comer with surprise. Jimmie Wilson shook hands cordially with him, while Mrs. Gill presented him to the other five. The breakfast that followed was a revelation to the unsophisticated youth—who had never beheld a table so elegantly appointed. The food, too, after his experiences at the Kelleys', was something to remember, as well as to presently enjoy ; there were the usual adjuncts of a well-ordered breakfast, which sorely tempted his appetite, already keen enough without such allurements. Mrs. Gill perceived the lad's appreciation of her good things, and was content to see them disappearing so rapidly, although Ferdinand had the native good breeding that withheld him from offending the proprieties of civilised society.

If the breakfast had been a surprise, much more so was the dinner. The polished silver and crystal,

the spotless table napery, the different courses, each tasting so very nice ; the poor fellow would thankfully have made his dinner from any single one, from the mysteriously compounded soup down to the rich pudding that followed joint and vegetables. Then there was the fruit and ice cream, which Ferdinand had beheld more fortunate youths gingerly sipping at church festivals.

They sat so long over their dinner he had no time to look into Shakespeare ; he had been anxiously following the fortunes of Antonio and Portia, and was hoping to get to a fortunate settlement of their difficulties at the noon hour, whereas he had barely time to get back to his work before the whistle blew.

Two of Mrs. Gill's young men were bank clerks, one a lawyer, another a doctor, and the others, Jimmie Wilson and Neville Fradsham, were junior partners in a large dry goods store.

Mrs. Gill felt called upon to explain, when Ferdinand had left the room, why she had introduced into this select circle a shabbily dressed young mechanic. Her explanations ended, she said, glancing around the table a little anxiously, " I hope you will not feel aggrieved that I have done this, even at the risk of losing some of you ; I could not have refused Harold Bowdoin's request. But surely it will not lead to that ? "

Gus Dodds and Harvey Dawson, the bank clerks, were the only ones she was doubtful about, and if they left, she could but say farewell to them, and straightway signify her willingness to put others in their place, since she always found it easy to fill a

vacancy ; but they were too well satisfied with their home to be ousted by an ignorant, beardless boy. They meant to resort to other measures. In a conference on the subject later on, they assured each other that although Mrs. Gill was a good soul, an excellent housekeeper, and a most judicious hand to superintend a dinner, yet she was blind as a bat to what might be going on under her very eyes, therefore it would be unwise to forfeit so excellent a boarding mistress when they could have a little sport, and get rid of the obnoxious boarder at the same time. They measured Ferdinand by themselves, and laid their plans accordingly. Doctor Radcliffe and Ruloff Akerman were too busy to waste precious time on anything so trivial as the garments a fellow-boarder wore, and either of them would classify Ferdinand Lee, if they understood him thoroughly, above either Dodds or Dawson.

Neville Fradsham with Jimmie Wilson belonged to Dr. Boardman's church, and together they bade fair to become of that elect type whose stay on this planet is altogether beneficial, and whose influence for good, like the afterglow of the sunset, endures when it has passed away.

Ferdinand worked that day like one in a dream ; mixed up with that unfortunate love story which Shakespeare has made immortal, were the scenes and faces introduced into his life within the last few days. He was not so oblivious to the distinctions in society as Dodds and Dawson fancied. True, he ate Mrs. Gill's good things with very considerable relish, while the undeveloped instinct for harmonious and refined

environments was wakened ; nevertheless he would have better enjoyed these dainties if taken in more homely fashion, away from the glances cast at him by those unsympathetic eyes. To run the gauntlet of these three times a day for an indefinite period, robbed him of much of the happiness he would otherwise have experienced. But he was too sturdily built in his inner man to voice these feelings to his young benefactor, or spoil his mother's joy when he wrote to her of his rise in circumstances.

It was the custom with Mrs. Gill's boarders to linger for a while at the table after the duties of the hour were satisfactorily completed. Books were discussed, politics, art, and local events. Ferdinand had a very excellent excuse for leaving the table directly he had swallowed his last mouthful at breakfast and dinner ; but in the evening there was no longer necessity for haste, so he sat more or less uncomfortably, listening to the conversation, grave and gay. He found that much might be learned, and the half-hours thus spent gave him much food for thought. He would like to have asked an occasional question, but when on rare occasions he ventured to do so, the look of well assumed astonishment bestowed by the two bank clerks, kept him from repeating the exercise.

His seat was directly opposite Dodds's, and the covert sneer was seldom lost on the lad after he had perpetrated some offence against table etiquette. There were so many unaccustomed niceties to bear in mind ; when he came in, hungry and in a hurry, he was apt to forget something. Very often it was

the napkin, the use of which had slipped his memory, the more especially as he was in constant dread of soiling its snowy whiteness; and then one of his persecutors was sure to introduce some irrelevant remark about the difficulties that confronted uncivilised people when trying to appear polite. Mrs. Gill used to be mildly surprised at the frequently recurring topic, but did not attempt to solve the matter. Sometimes Ferdinand would so far forget himself as to insert the tip of his knife within his lips; for the life of him he could not understand why the knife should be esteemed so dangerous an implement. The look of horrified disgust his *vis-à-vis* would assume on such occasions sent a maddening rush of blood into his face, and straightway he was likely to perpetrate some equally unfortunate offence, when he would very often leave the table in haste, usually on such occasions failing to ask Mrs. Gill to excuse him, a lapse from the paths of rectitude the good lady found hard to overlook. Once safe in his own room, and settled down for the evening with a favourite author, he soon forgot those minor discords, and forded out into seas of beauty whither Dodds and Dawson had no waymarks to guide them. He was as regular in attendance at church as the sexton, although it must be confessed he often cast a longing glance at his book, wondering if he might not as wisely perform his duty in the peaceful retreat of his bedroom.

As the months rolled by Harold was filled with consternation at the quantity of literature Ferdinand absorbed. Continuing at the present rate all the

great classics of the world would be completed by this youth, a mere day labourer, before he was thirty. That he comprehended what he read was evident, for, over-estimating Harold's acquaintance with literature, Ferdinand poured out of a full memory what he read, and enjoyed nothing better than to talk it all over critically with his friend, the conversation, it must be confessed, being for the most part a monologue. Before the winter had set in he had completed the reading of Shakespeare's works down to the final sonnet, Milton's "Paradise Lost," and a good part of Scott's poems. Harold was surprised that Ferdinand held himself so entirely to poetry, at last suggesting that some good prose be substituted. Ferdinand looked wistfully at the long array of poets on his shelves, but patiently submitted to what he regarded Harold's superior judgment.

"I never saw much poetry," said he, "before I came here, except the hymn-book; that is the reason I crave it. I would like to begin and go over all these again."

"I can't understand how you get time to read so much."

"I have all the time there is, except when I am in the factory and at church. While I am working I go over what I have read, and that keeps me from forgetting it. I feel pretty well acquainted with the men and women that Shakespeare writes about. I read until ten at night, and begin again at five in the morning. When I am more eager to see how their fortunes are going to end I read later, or rise half an hour earlier."

"Father told me to try you on Ruskin and Carlyle; which shall it be, or will you take some of both?"

"Just as you please," Ferdinand said patiently; if he could not commune with the poets it made little difference what he had.

Harold took down "Sartor Resartus." He had heard his father and Dr. Boardman talking about Carlyle, and they both agreed it was his finest piece of work. Ruskin's "Modern Painters" was the other book chosen. The title sounded well, that was all he knew of it. Ferdinand immediately took his leave; he was so miserly in regard to time, that Harold felt ashamed of his careless waste of this most precious commodity.

The next evening after prayer-meeting Ferdinand waited outside for Harold. His first words were: "Those men think poetry just the same as the poets, only they don't make it rhyme. I like it better for a change. It is a grand world to be in, if there is plenty of that kind of reading."

Harold repeated Ferdinand's words to his father, when the latter said musingly—

"It is a great pity for a youth like that to be a hewer of wood; ask him if he would like an education."

"Would you give him the money to go to college, father?"

Harold asked eagerly, while before his imagination floated an alluring picture, himself and Ferdinand together at the university, and, later on, partners in business, for Harold's choice of a profession was

made in childhood, when he had listened to his father pleading in court for a man's life, with the prisoner trembling in the dock. His question was not answered; but Harold knew that his father was given to performing beyond his promises.

In his impatience to interview Ferdinand on the matter of securing an education, Harold waited outside the factory, and joined him as he came out. When he saw Harold his face lighted up.

"That Teufelsdröck was as great as any of the poets. I finished him before I came to work this morning. It took a good deal of time to hunt up some of the words and the names of gods. I could not get on at all without the classical dictionary you loaned me, but I am getting to know a good deal about them now; every book I read makes it easier for the next one."

Harold felt ashamed. How seldom in his reading did he seek the meaning of a classical reference!

"It is a pity that you can't become a scholar. Would you like to if you had the chance?"

"I was anxious once to go to college, but it was useless to think about it. I don't mind so much now since I have begun to read."

"What did you do in leisure hours before you came here?"

"I studied my school books. Mother is a great hand for education, and she kept me at school every spare chance. I have often gone for a couple of hours, the teacher used to help me more than the rest when I was there."

"Suppose some one would send you to college?"

"It is useless to suppose anything like that, and anyway, I must work for them at home until the other boys are old enough to take my place. If I had only myself to think of I would have been pretty far along with my education by this time."

Harold was silent. Here was a barrier in the way of further educational progress he had not taken into account. His regret was keen, but he did not propose to lighten it by sharing it with his friend, to whom it would mean so much.

CHAPTER IV

THE CALL

FERDINAND'S turn came to lead the young people's meeting early in December. Harold had been anxious for this for the past few months, but Ferdinand's shyness, together with the president's hesitancy in the matter, had prevented. If they each could have realised what this act of service cost him, they might not have been so surprised at the way he performed his task. For days he had turned resolutely from every sort of literature but his Bible. To bear the ark of the Lord meant for him the cleanest of thoughts as well as hands. When Harold took his place in the vestry that evening Ferdinand was at the desk, his face shaded by his hand, which was quivering with nervousness. The clock struck the hour, when he arose and announced the hymn, without lifting his eyes to see if he had a congregation or not. They were not prepared for the reading of that hymn, or the Scripture lesson that followed. The reader's voice was so vibrant and sympathetic, that Harold felt the tears come to his eyes, while the hymn, familiar to him as his own name, impressed

him with a new and altogether strange beauty. When Ferdinand rose to speak, surprise was deepened into awe. There was certainly no attempt at display; indeed, it could hardly have been more natural if it had been the song of a bird sitting on a bough in some woodland fastness. It may have been this feature in his address that first charmed them, but the thoughts were beyond what they expected from a factory hand. The speaker had not been holding communion with great thinkers so exclusively all these months without getting in some measure to partake of their nature. Such intercourse had kept his thoughts clean and on high levels. When set to originate sentences himself, he was not forced to let down his vessel into an empty well. The exclamation, on all sides, was the well-known quotation, "Alas, master! it was borrowed," originated by the young woodcutter seven-and-twenty centuries ago. However, they decided that in any case it was remarkable for a day labourer, at his age, to use such wise discrimination in the selection of borrowed material. Harold had sat spellbound, watching how those marvellously deep eyes glowed, when Ferdinand had forgotten his shyness, which he quickly did when his imagination took free rein, clothing in whatever rich garb presented itself, the thoughts he had been mining from the deeps of his soul. Jimmie Wilson sat like one in a dream. "Was this the shy, awkward fellow who sat with them at table every day, but who was as much a stranger now as the first week he was there? Could it be possible that he comprehended the meaning of those sentences

falling from his lips with such unconscious power. To believe that they were his own was more than he could realise. Ferdinand tried to escape when the meeting was dismissed without saluting any one by the way, but his path was barred. Mr. Haseldene, Dr. Boardman's assistant, came to him directly. He was President of the young people's meeting, and a general favourite.

"You have given us a wonderful surprise. Where did you get that fine address?" he asked.

"From God," was the astounding reply.

Mr. Haseldene was silent for a few seconds, but still held Ferdinand's hand closely.

"How old are you?"

"I will be nineteen next month."

"What have been your educational privileges, may I ask?"

"I went to school till I was thirteen; since then I have studied what I could"—he paused, and then added—"and read."

"Yes, since your address is original, we must believe you have read wisely and well."

"There is abundance to read, if one only had the time."

Ferdinand looked longingly towards the door as he spoke, but there were curious groups between him and that desired haven, who evidently were waiting to speak to him.

"Yes, the world is very rich in literature, and you are fortunate to have made the discovery so early. I presume you have read widely."

"Since I have come here I have so occupied all

my spare time, or nearly all. It helps me more than my school books, a great deal more," he added emphatically.

"With most of us text-book knowledge is a prime necessity."

"I would like to go home now."

Mr. Haseldene could not help smiling; this large-boned, clean-faced young man had the naïveté of a child. He clasped his hand warmly as he said—

"You have helped us all to-night. May God bless you."

"He is blessing me every day more than I can tell."

"How genuine and also transparent he is!" said Mr. Haseldene to one who had been listening to the conversation.

"I think the Lord has some special work for him to do. Did you ever hear a first effort to equal it, Mr. Haseldene?"

"Never; to tell the truth, I was pretty anxious about this evening's meeting. Had Harold Bowdoin not been so eager to have him appointed, I would not have dreamed of such a thing."

"Harold's pride in him was noticeable to-night."

"No wonder. We might any of us indulge in self-elation if we brought such a person out. If I mistake not, he is gifted above most who are sent on their errand through life, whether for good or ill."

Ferdinand stood in considerable awe of the assistant pastor, hence he did not break rudely from his congratulations; for the rest he was not ready

to be victimised. Ignoring the hands ready to clasp his, he jerked his head a few times under the impression that he was bowing to his admirers, and escaped into the street. The way in which he covered the ground between the church door and his own room would have been the admiration of a professional pedestrian. New thoughts were flushing his brain that night; dominant over the rest, a consciousness that he had received, from some far world, where God dwells visibly, a call to become His ambassador. Locking his door, he threw himself down in strange dismay of soul. How could he do this thing that was only less bitter than death itself? One so awkward, so unsuited altogether to come out before men and women in the capacity of a teacher. He would gladly consent if he might be sent to some barbarous tribe, but it would be a lifelong martyrdom to stand, like Dr. Boardman, in a splendid church, with its crowd of professed worshippers, some of them critical, others careless, with here and there a blessed exception. He had early decided that many of the people with whom he bowed in the house of prayer hardly measured up to some of the great heathen of past ages, with whom he was making acquaintance.

In all his life he had never had such an experience as this. Indeed it seemed, as he struggled in agony of soul, that he never knew before what it was to have overwhelming, blinding, mental anguish. It seemed to him, too, that he would never again know what joy was; light-hearted, buoyant delight in the fact of existence. Yet there was no thought of escape. He

did not for an instant harbour the whispered suggestion, reiterated over and over again by some voice addressing his soul, that he could refuse; that he could utter a final "no" to God's call, the imperious "no" of the free human will. Taught from the dawn of thought, he possessed a profound reverence for Divine authority, and inheriting as well from a long line of humble, God-fearing ancestors, a religious tendency, it was morally impossible for him to do other than submit to what he knew was a call from Heaven. He wondered if the Lord Jesus passed through a defiance of pain; did He, too, shrink from taking up the work of human redemption?

He arose, struck a light, and looking at the alarm-clock found that it was long past midnight. He was surprised at the lateness of the hour, and yet the time since he started for meeting that evening seemed so far in the past, he could scarcely realise that only some half-dozen hours had elapsed. He did not know that in that brief period he had passed from a care-free youth to manhood, with the profoundest problems of life before him for solution.

CHAPTER V

GIFTS

HAROLD went home that evening in an excited frame of mind. Something must be done by somebody for Ferdinand, since it was a sin against humanity at large to have such a youth wasting his gifts of intellect and speech on the work of an unskilled labourer. Underlying these projects for his friend was the satisfactory reflection that he would have himself an interest in the work Ferdinand might yet achieve. He felt now that it had not been in vain for him to forego the luxuries his two extra dollars per week would have provided.

His father was at home that evening, in fact there had been a dinner party in honour of a prominent politician who was in the city for a few days. In order to take in Ferdinand's address Harold had been forced to content himself with a bite in the cook's pantry. He did not stand in awe of politicians, great or small; indeed, he had a rather wholesome contempt for the majority of them, so, as he hastened homeward, he made up his mind to try and secure

from them a generous gift, abstracted no doubt originally from the Government chest, for the furtherance of his friend's interest. He went to his room, and dressing with more than his usual care, descended to the drawing-room. He was rejoiced to see so large a company, and such a good representation of capitalists. His face expressed so much satisfaction while he greeted them individually, that more than one father present wished that his own boys were as pleasant-mannered as this Bowdoin youth. It was evidently a relief to have this break in their discussion of the political aspect of the country, so that when Harold eagerly introduced the subject nearest his heart, they were prepared for the demand on their pocket-books which followed. He described the quantity and quality of reading his friend had accomplished in the past six months, crowned by the eloquent address given that evening, which, he assured them enthusiastically, was as good as any preacher could have given. He had provided himself with a blank book, and presenting it first to his father, he passed it around to every one present.

With parental pride his father related the sacrifice of money his son had been making all these months to make his friend comfortable.

"Harold had a weakness for the more expensive kinds of confectionery," he said. "It was his only dissipation, and we did not interfere, afraid of drawing the lines too tightly, but he has not bought a pound since last June. He looks fifty per cent. healthier, so that the sacrifice he made for another has been compensated many times over. As a thankoffering for

what young Lee has done for him, I put down my subscription gladly."

Sir Rupert, the guest of the evening, looked surprised when he saw his host's subscription. He hesitated for a moment and then wrote his name and contribution. Harold was burning with impatience to look at the list, as one by one the names were added, but he could not bring himself to do so in the presence of the donors; but as he took the book from the last contributor he made a graceful little speech, of which his mother was so proud she actually shed a few tears into her filmy handkerchief.

The boy cast such longing glances at the book that his father said, "We will excuse you; I know you are impatient to examine our list of donations."

"Thank you very much. I will come back probably to thank you all again, and acquaint you with the amount."

Safely outside the drawing-room he opened the book. The first item nearly took his breath away. His father's subscription was four years at college. "Hurrah!" He murmured it softly, but the sound reached his father's ears, bringing a sensation of keen pleasure. Sir Rupert gave fifty dollars, but then he was many times over a millionaire and could well afford to be generous. Folded inside the book were the cheques or banknotes of each of the donors. He ran his eye quickly down the list, not counting his father's donation. There were just three hundred and twenty dollars. He stood transfixed. In one evening, or rather in one half-hour, he had revolutionised a life—perhaps hundreds of lives!

"Whatever good Ferdinand Lee may accomplish as a minister of the Gospel, I shall have a partnership in," he said musingly. These politicians who had given so generously would also enter into the partnership. This investment in human stock might yield them larger dividends than any of their other enterprises, coming, too, at a time when they might sorely need such help.

He stood for a few minutes to control himself, for Harold, although an only child, and in some respects, perhaps, a spoiled one, had noble instincts and a tender heart. He was suddenly startled by a groan that came from the drawing-room, and instantly all was in commotion. Before he could get his money deposited in his purse the servants came rushing upstairs, summoned by the violent ringing of the bell. His father, dashing out of the room, entered his office, and a moment later Harold heard him summoning a couple of physicians. He entered the room, when before him lying on the floor with a sofa pillow under his head, was Squire Thorpe, his eyes looking upwards in an awful stare, as if some vision not describable in human speech had appalled him. Harold went to his mother, who was kneeling beside the prostrate figure, her own face deathly pale; the lace and draperies of her rich evening costume dripping with the water which she had been pouring on the face and hands of the form before her.

"Is he dead?" Harold asked, in an awe-struck voice; but no one answered. Death was a most unwelcome guest, interrupting them in the midst of their plans for the next campaign. Mrs. Bowdoin

continued bathing the face, already grown cold under her touch.

The doctors soon came hurrying in. Their examination made, there was nothing further for them to do. The heart had ceased its wearisome beating, and was quiet now after sixty years of activity. The newly-made widow arrived shortly after. She was a handsome woman, not yet forty—a second wife. Harold expected tears, but was disappointed. She applied her handkerchief to her eyes, but he was convinced that they were drier than his own; neither did she come near the dead form of the husband who had preferred her to every other woman, and who had lifted her from penury to affluence. A little later his two sons came—bald-headed men with striking physical resemblance to their father. They paid no attention to their stepmother as they gave commands concerning the removal of the dead.

The dinner party was broken up, the guests seemed anxious to escape from the gloomy scene, and soon Harold and his parents were left alone in the room to which an hour before had come the unbidden and unwelcome guest.

CHAPTER VI

THE CALL REPEATED

HAROLD was obliged to wait until Ferdinand's day's work was done the following evening, ere he could convey to him the money that had been subscribed, and acquaint him with his change of fortune from a day labourer to preacher of the gospel ; for Harold would be content with nothing short of the latter. All night he had dreamed of death, and all day the uncertainty of life and the length of eternity had been in his thoughts. Squire Thorpe had been a member of the Dominion Parliament for a score of years. He had made money enough out of his calling to become a knight, and Mrs. Thorpe had expected soon to have her cards engraved with her new title, Lady Thorpe of Thorpe Mann. Possibly this was the bitterest drop in connection with her husband's death ; she would never hear herself addressed " Your ladyship."

That evening Harold waited long enough for Ferdinand to take his supper, and then with his subscription book, and the roll of bills, he hastened to Mrs. Gill's.

He found Ferdinand sitting in his room, the open Bible on his knees, and a look of despair upon his face.

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Harold; "have you heard bad news?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

Ferdinand was silent.

"Is your mother sick?"

"It is not that sort of trouble."

Harold was anxious: could Ferdinand have got into difficulty with those roughs at the factory?

Ferdinand raised his eyes with a look of hopeless despair.

"Tell me what is wrong. If you have done anything, I will get my father to defend you in court."

He looked at Harold with surprise. "Can't you think of any other trouble that might come to a fellow?"

"You are not in love, I hope." There was a look of dismay on the sympathetic face. This would certainly be a most disastrous thing, especially if Ferdinand felt called to an early marriage.

"Did you ever hear of any one being called to preach, when they were ignorant, awkward, and shy?"

"Have you been called?" Harold asked joyfully.

"I have had a call; sometimes I think it is from the Lord, and again I think maybe it's from the devil—he is equal to anything."

"When did you get the call?"

"Last night in the meeting there was a voice spoke

to me, one that the rest of you could not hear, of course; since then I have been in a horror of darkness."

"Why, I came on the same errand. It was certainly the voice of the Lord you heard."

Ferdinand hid his face in his hands.

"It would be a great pity for you not to preach, when you have such a gift. We never had a new hand speak as you did last night, and not many old ones. They are all talking about you, and on the strength of your becoming a preacher, I went to work as soon as I got home from the meeting. A dinner party was being held at our house, and I went around among the guests for subscriptions for your education, and here is the list."

Harold thrust the fateful book into Ferdinand's hand.

"If I had your call, and your gift for saying the right words, and your way of saying them, I would be lifted above the earth. One of those rich men died in our house last night - he had made no preparation so far as we know for his sudden journey. It has given me some solemn thoughts, and if I can help men, rich or poor, to get ready for that journey, I shall think it the greatest honour God can confer upon me. I am surprised that you feel this way, and I must confess, not a little disappointed."

"Oh, Harold, to think of standing in a pulpit before a crowd of men and women, and to talk to them all my life long. I would rather," he paused for awhile, and then said solemnly, "I would rather die than do it,"

"You won't have to be preaching always—only an hour or two out of every week; that won't be much.

Ferdinand sighed heavily as he opened the book, and looked at the amount that had been collected.

The first item startled him: "Four years at college—George J. Bowdoin." The book dropped from his hand, and his face was hidden from sight, while through the fingers the tears slowly trickled.

"You are not displeased with me for doing it, are you, Ferdinand?"

By a strong effort the latter controlled his feelings and rising to his feet said, "If I ever do any good in the world, you will have the credit of it, and in the world where such credit will help you the most. I will try to do my part in obeying Him who has the right to my service. God bless you, Harold, and reward you after His very best fashion."

After a while Harold picked up the book. "Let us attend to business now. I don't want you to work another day in the factory. You must go to school at once and get ready for college. I have money enough to support your family for a while; I don't know just how much it takes to keep a house like yours in the country, but here are three hundred and twenty dollars, and I can get two dollars a week beside, and perhaps a trifle more; we will say four hundred and fifty dollars to begin with."

Ferdinand listened like one in a dream. "Four hundred and fifty dollars!" he said at last. "Why that is more than we have had, outside what our farm produces, in a dozen years. We shall not need

another dollar. I will go home; I can do a lot of work night and morning, and during the holidays. Four miles from our place is a grammar school, where I can get ready for college; I can easily walk that distance every day. You have cleared away every obstacle; I hope I may do my part of the work as nobly."

"We can see each other during the holidays. Next summer we might go on our bicycles; I will see that you have one. A trip through Maine or Quebec would be splendid."

"I must stay home and work during the holidays, there is always so much to do on a farm."

"You must have some change, let me plan for it; you can take a fortnight surely."

"There is nothing I would like better." How those eyes glowed as he spoke, while Harold resolved that his friend should have this pleasure!

"I shall feel as if you were my brother. I believe we shall think more of each other than the average brothers do."

"I believe you are more to me now than any brother I have," Ferdinand said, with a break in his voice. They looked into each other's eyes and then clasped hands, neither of them at the time thinking of the wide social difference between them. Harold had long ago recognised in Ferdinand a peer, save in the extrinsic belongings that may pass away in an hour.

CHAPTER VII

AT HOME

FERDINAND resigned his position in Wright's factory the following day. There were plenty of youths ready to step into his vacant place, and the foreman, used to frequent changes, did not give him a second thought. With such a pocketful of money he felt free to invest a few dollars in books, and also in presents for the dear ones at home. The array of literature in the book store was bewildering, which compelled him to take a good bit of his brief holiday to make a wise selection. He intended taking the evening train, since he could walk the four miles lying between the station and home, as well by starlight as sunlight. One hour was as safe as another in that peaceful country district where every one knew each other, and not a single rogue could be found within a radius of many miles. Harold came around after school to say goodbye, and found him packing his few possessions into his trunk.

"I will go home and bring you some books; you will have plenty of room there for twice as much stuff as you have to put in it," he said, casting a sympathetic look at the nearly empty trunk.

He presently returned, accompanied by a servant, and both of them were loaded.

"I hope you won't be offended, but I found such a quantity of clothes in my wardrobe, I brought them to you; they can be made over for your younger brothers."

Ferdinand thanked him gratefully. As he packed away the garments he said, "Why, Harold, some of these things are as good as new. There are enough to last me for best until I am ready for college; the only objection, they are entirely too fine for a farm lad."

Harold did not explain that he had stripped his clothes closet, having scarcely a garment remaining save what he stood in. He very distinctly understood that his father was not only a very rich man, but was year by year making large additions to a fortune out of all proportion to their need. His tailor's bill was settled unquestioningly by his father and not deducted from his allowance, hence it cost him nothing to be generous in the bestowal of his wearing apparel.

The trunk was full to overflowing, while yet there was a goodly heap of books lying on the floor. These were tied securely in a brown paper parcel, and when all was ready for the express-man, Ferdinand surveyed his possessions with a thankful heart.

"I can't begin to tell you how rich I feel. Those books will fill many a happy hour when my lessons are learned and the day's work is ended. Mother likes to read aloud to us; one of us takes her knitting

work, and it rests her. I did not know how happy she made us until I left home. Mothers are a grand institution, one of the happiest thoughts of our Creator."

"Mine certainly is," Harold said heartily. "At Christmas I would like to go and see your mother; would you be willing to have me visit you for a night?"

"You know how gladly I would welcome you, if our house was fit to receive you. You could scarcely realise what a homely, weather-beaten little place it is that shelters us. But come, we will provide other cheer for you than fine rooms and furniture."

"I shall look forward with much satisfaction to seeing you in your own home."

Harold's knowledge of the abodes of the poor was confined for the most part to books, but he had an impression that there was a charm in these quiet country homes not always found in stately mansions.

They walked together to the station, where they parted: Ferdinand going on his way with strange, new thoughts filling his brain; while Harold bent his steps homeward, both glad and sad. How much he would miss his friend, and yet what high hopes he had of his ultimate achievements, in all of which he would himself be a partner.

The surprise and gladness with which Ferdinand's most amazing declarations were received, when the next morning he presented himself unexpectedly to his family, would have charmed Harold. The kitchen door was seldom locked at night. When he tried it

that night shortly before the clock struck twelve he found it open. The family would be tired, so he went quietly to sleep on the roomy lounge under the windows, and was sleeping soundly when his mother came downstairs the following morning. She was startled to find him there, and somewhat alarmed, as she could think of no other cause for his presence at home save a painful one. He slept so soundly that all the family had assembled when he awakened, while a grateful odour of buckwheat cakes and bacon pervaded the room. He was soon ready for his breakfast, and after his mother had said grace, he took out his roll of bills and gave them to her.

"What is this?" she asked, as she took in their large denomination—fifty-dollar bills and tens. "Why, my son, how have you come by so large a sum of money?"

Her face grew suddenly pale. Surely her honest, true-hearted boy could not have done wrong?

"You need not be afraid, mother, nor ashamed of the way I have come by that money."

"How much is there?" Rufus asked eagerly.

"Three hundred dollars. There were twenty more, but I laid out about forty dollars. I had some wages besides, and I could get things cheaper than in Surrey."

A low whistle somewhat relieved his brother's surprise. Rufus had a keen relish for money and the good things that money can bring. Such quantities of it as lay beside his mother's plate was rather overwhelming to one to whom five dollars at a time in the family purse meant affluence. Ferdinand

greatly enjoyed the mystified expression on the faces around the breakfast table."

"There is something more beside the dollars—four years at college, with all my expenses paid," he said, glancing into his mother's face, which was now flushing with rapture.

"Oh, Ferdinand!" she ejaculated, and then burst into tears.

Rufus looked ill at ease. It was seldom he saw his mother thus affected, and under any circumstances it made him uncomfortable, especially as on this occasion smiles were more suitable.

Ferdinand proceeded to explain. When he ceased speaking a silence ensued, broken presently by his little sister, who remarked plaintively—

"The pancakes are getting cold, and I want my breakfast."

"That is a very sensible remark, Barbara," Rufus said, as he proceeded to help himself to the buckwheat cakes and applied the gravy and molasses generously; with so much money on hand there was no longer the necessity for stinting oneself in these humble luxuries.

CHAPTER VIII

AT SCHOOL

FERDINAND was the eldest of five. Rufus and Charlie were aged respectively seventeen and fifteen. Diphtheria had carried away a boy and a girl some years before, and then there came Margery and Barbara, the former nine, and the latter a bright-eyed, inquisitive little maiden of six years. She was profoundly interested in all living things, and cared more for the dumb animals about the farm than any make-believe existences in the shape of rag babies, in which Margery greatly delighted. She was a baby in arms when the father was suddenly taken from them. A pair of runaway horses, a collision, and he was brought home cold in death. He had been a God-fearing man, faithful in his relationships to both worlds, hence his swift passage from life left no uncertainty in the minds of his friends regarding the termination of that journey, "his longest and his last." Ferdinand then suddenly found himself the breadwinner for the family, and he a lad only just entering his teens. It had been his father's purpose to give to this well-endowed firstborn son an education. It would

be possible for them, by some self-denial, to get him prepared for Normal School, where, by securing a first-class teacher's certificate, all the world would be before him in which to win a goodly share of its prizes. With this end in view he had been kept at school, and so diligently had he studied that before the prescribed age for entrance to Normal School he bade fair to compass the required knowledge.

This bright dream was rudely destroyed. School was given up, and, with only a boy's strength, a man's tasks were required of him. Friends offered to adopt her children, but Mrs. Lee clung passionately to her family, and worked very often from dawn far into the night with this end in view. How hard a struggle she and Ferdinand found it to keep the family together only they and the Father in whom they trusted ever knew. She and her husband at their marriage had come to this greenwood farm. The most of their children were born in a log-house, but it was a well-ordered, godly home, and therefore happy. A neighbouring farmhouse had later on been bought and moved on their own land. It was getting somewhat old, and by no means an abode to foster vanity, but the change from the log cabin was marked, and so they were bravely content. Only a score of acres as yet were reclaimed from the "forest primeval." Certainly they were heavily taxed to feed and clothe six persons. The father, in leisure moments of farm work, had turned his hand to other things, thereby earning many a dollar wherewith to increase the home comforts; but at his death not only this source of supply was stopped, but help had to be hired to

carry on the work of the farm for weeks in the summer. As the years rolled on, after that fateful day when the husband and father was sacrificed to the mad fury of the terrified horses, the seemingly impossible had been compassed. They had lived somehow and kept out of debt. Five years had elapsed, and then Ferdinand had been led to go out from home. With his mother's full consent he joined the huge army of wage earners in the city. How he had succeeded seemed to-day, to the family gathered around that homely board, like a chapter from a fairy book. To be in a position to go to school until he was ready for college, for that roll of bills he had given to his mother would keep them in great comfort for years, supplemented by the income from the farm; but when his work at school was successfully crowned by ability to matriculate at college, to have his way paid for four long years, was a marvel of good fortune, utterly beyond their wildest dreams. The money for his college expenses, they unanimously agreed, must be paid dollar for dollar some day.

The mother had not been so glad-hearted through all the lonely years of her widowhood as she was that morning, and her happiness was intensified when, on the following Monday morning, she prepared her son's lunch, and then watched him out of sight as he hastened down the lane in the grey of the short winter morning on his way to school. As for Ferdinand, he could with difficulty realise that he had been suddenly lifted from the drudgery of the day labourer, amid rude associates, to the life of a student. He took his joy solemnly, while the profoundest depths

of his nature were stirred as he proceeded on his way over the frozen ground. Could he ever forget the keen joy he felt at that hour because what he had so despairingly coveted for years was now to be his? He was not ready to change places this windy, sunless morning with any favourite of fortune on the globe; he felt no dread of defeat.

How quickly those four miles were compassed! The schoolhouse, an imposing building, stood on the brow of the hill in the centre of the town. There were some half-dozen teachers, and the High School was in a wing by itself. He was early, but that did not matter; the janitor had the furnace heated finely. Seating himself at a desk, he opened one of his books and fell to studying, his heart overflowing with gratitude that it was possible for him to take up the interrupted lessons of other days. The students came flocking in, looking well rested after the holidays.

Ferdinand was appointed his desk, and in a very short time had begun the work that was to be lifelong, his interrupted studies becoming at once as fascinating as if they had gone on continuously. He felt no fear of being able to keep abreast of his classes. Where there were so many laggards it would be easy work for a student so untiring to keep even with his school work, help in the work at home, and continue the perusal of his favourite authors. Stern necessity had acquainted him with time's untold value; to live up to this comprehension was only second nature. Teachers and fellow-students expressed sympathy with him because of his long, bleak walk to school,

but he assured them he had nothing left to ask for in this world, his privileges having gone so far beyond his wildest dreams. The winter storms he confronted with jubilant indifference; nothing that Nature sent in the way of whirling snow or frost daunted him. Soon the muscular frame rounded, while a healthy glow tinted the face, and what inner fire those marvellous eyes reflected!

He arose and commenced work every morning at five o'clock. In that well-ventilated house a plentiful supply of fuel was a necessity. Rufus and Charlie had to cut it down in the adjacent forest on the Saturday. Ferdinand attended to the hauling, while he helped to get it in readiness for the stoves in the long mornings. With the lantern swinging above his head he sawed and split the dry limbs and tree trunks, going over at the same time the day's lessons. By lamplight in the dark winter mornings the breakfast was eaten, the daily service of Scripture reading and prayer performed in turn by himself and his mother, and then he started out cheerily to his day's duties.

How often he and his mother congratulated themselves on the fact that there was nothing to pay for fuel, water, rent, or sunshine, while the bread and vegetables and meat were each the produce of the farm, the labour to secure them being the only outlay. Grim want that had stared at them had skulked out of sight. The dreary background of those lean years made their comforts of to-day all the more enjoyable.

CHAPTER IX

HAROLD'S VISIT

A FEW days before Christmas Harold wrote announcing his desire to visit them for a day and night during Christmas week. Good Mrs. Lee was in great consternation when the letter came, for how could they hope to make even moderately comfortable one accustomed to the luxuries of a city home? But they set to work in right earnest, so that when the hour and guest arrived a festive air pervaded the entire premises. Seven-year-old Barbara, in a lovely new frock decorated with pink ribbons, the like of which had never pertained to her wardrobe hitherto, peeped shyly from behind the door at the delightful friend who had made possible her unaccustomed adornment, longing to show her gratitude, but completely puzzled as to how it might be done. Her uncertainty was further increased when the boys, with much ado, brought in a great packing-case from the express waggon. It was opened forthwith at Harold's request, and lo! what a spectacle met their astonished sight! There were dresses for Mrs. Lee and her little

daughters, a fleecy shawl for the former, so thick and large that she could now fearlessly confront the coldest Sunday in the year and drive the four miles to church without risk of freezing. Each one of the boys was remembered with a suit of clothes and a pair of stout boots. There were fleecy blankets that would be delightful to cuddle into on a frosty night, and bales of cotton to be manufactured into things useful in every household. In addition to all these welcome gifts were grapes and oranges, cream-candy that became henceforth a delicious memory, with great, tender apples that left nothing further to be desired.

It was to be their real Christmas Day, and in honour of their guest a plump turkey had been reserved from the contingent intended for market. With grave solicitude and careful attention to a recipe the mother had prepared it for dinner. Although she was ignorant of the mysteries of scientific cookery, she was yet able to cook in a way that her children pronounced marvellously good, and which on the present occasion tasted very good to Harold Bowdoin, accustomed as he was to the creations of a professional cook. In a little while the last turn was given to the dinner, and Ferdinand at the foot of the table was, for the first time, attempting to carve a turkey on scientific principles learned from his mother's cookery-book; but reading how it should be done and performing the difficult operation were very different, hence the way that unfortunate turkey went sliding across the huge dish, a relic from the days of his grandmother, was pro-

voking in the extreme; but at last the work was accomplished, when the knives and forks began to clatter merrily, and soon there was little left of the turkey but a few bones.

Such a feast had never been partaken under that roof within memory of its inmates, for the turkey had only been the introduction to a fine plum pudding, with home-made pies of mince and pumpkin and all the vegetables usually found in the cottage garden. Rufus swallowed his last grape in a meditative mood. How long would it be ere a dinner like this would become a common experience in his life? That some day it should become this was a fixed resolve in his mind. He and Ferdinand were as opposite in their tastes as two human beings could well be. The one lived in a world of abstractions, practically indifferent to the housing and fare of his house of clay, but vividly alive to what pertained to his immaterial essence whereby he was allied to the vast realm of intellect; the other giving hardly a thought to his invisible world, but keenly solicitous as to the body that was to be nurtured day by day.

"Rufus will make a good provider for some lucky girl," his mother sometimes remarked, when by contrivances best known to himself he managed to secure, at their proper seasons, the fur-bearing animals whose handsome coats were appropriated by human wearers, game, fish, or whatever forest or stream provided for the skilful hunter, and which could be turned into cash.

To say that Rufus regarded his brother's thirst for knowledge with disdain would very mildly express

his estimate of such pursuits, but when Ferdinand came home with those three hundred and odd dollars his views were somewhat modified. This day as he keenly noted the movements of their guest, and saw how this high-bred young man seemed to reverence Ferdinand, he comprehended, as never before, the worth of intellectual endowments and their judicious cultivation.

Harold left the following morning more firmly convinced than ever that the truest poetry of life was to be found in quiet farmhouses. He had very thoroughly explored in that brief afternoon every field and pasture of the Lee homestead, penetrating into the green woods far enough to find whence came the supply of fuel for the ancient homestead. He lingered about the barns and outbuildings wherein were comfortably folded quadrupeds and feathered bipeds; although the buildings were one and all rough-hewn, yet their very homeliness struck some responsive chord in his nature. Altogether it was the most enjoyable of visits, and he returned to his home full of enthusiasm concerning the Lee farmstead, and the heroic lives sheltered there.

CHAPTER X

THE WORK BEGUN

To such an industrious student as Ferdinand, it was a comparatively light task to keep abreast of his classes, hence he was able to give many an hour of the long winter evenings to his favourite authors. Harold was so generous in his gifts of literature, Ferdinand would have been in danger of becoming a mental dyspeptic had he attempted to compass it all ; but he held himself resolutely to but few books, making himself master of the message they had to give. Already, if so disposed, he could while away the tedium of the long walk to and from school by quotations from the great poets ; indeed, these writers had taken such possession of him, he used sometimes to wonder whether it was their thoughts or his own that filled so many of his waking hours. Their characters seemed as real to him as the neighbours whose farms he daily passed on his way to school.

One day, as he was fighting his way homeward through a drifting storm, a voice out of the tempest seemed to say to him that there was other work to do beside filling the storehouse of his own brain with

knowledge. Far up the road from their own gate was a new settlement, where a minister seldom penetrated. Children were growing up who had never been inside a Sunday School, and rarely, if ever, heard a prayer or sermon. Here was work for him to do, and that immediately. He proceeded homewards, indifferent to the fury of the elements, the storm raging in his own breast more fiercely. How could he do this work?

His mother noticed his unwonted depression, and was solicitous to administer her favourite herb tea, fearing that La Grippe, which was sweeping down the countryside, had claimed her son a victim.

"The malady is where medicine cannot reach; you need not worry about me, mother," he assured her; but she did worry, and kept her medicine on the stove, filling her fire-bright kitchen with its pungent odour. At bedtime, when the family had retired, he told her the message that had come to him.

"You must heed the voice," was her emphatic response. "If you neglect to do so your whole after life will feel the loss, and then, who can tell? others beside yourself may suffer."

He went to his bedroom under the eaves, where through the open rafters the wind shrieked, and on his very bed the snow sifted down through cracks in the wall. Again, as on that other night when a call had come, he fought his battle with the powers of darkness, and before he slept the victory was gained. When Saturday came he was at his work betimes, and, having finished his tasks, donned one of Harold's suits of clothes preserved for best

and taking a lunch, started out for Tinker Hill. This name was given in contempt by one who knew the gossip ways of the settlement, and unfortunately the name had clung to it. The clock struck nine before he left the last house on his round, making announcement of a meeting the following afternoon. Some of the people regarded this self-appointed preacher with high disdain, but others thankfully received him. They were hungry for some food, no matter how slender the repast might be.

One old lady, who had seen better days, remarked to a neighbour, "The Lord used a ram's horn in the hands of Joshua, and an ox-goad in the hands of Shamgar, to do his work, and he can use that modest youth too. One could see it was not work of his own choosing coming to help us in this unsavoury neighbourhood."

Ferdinand walked home through the drifted lanes of snow to find his mother waiting up for him, with a bright fire and savoury stew to refresh him. She looked at him closely and then said, with a happy face—

"You look more contented than I have seen you for a long time; the Lord has begun at once to reward you for obeying Him."

"Will you come with me to-morrow, mother?"

"I will gladly go with you; we need not go to church in the morning, it would leave us too little time."

"If you think I do not have the gifts necessary for a preacher, you will tell me so honestly, and that will end the matter, for a mother can see farther than

anybody into her child's future. There is no message I could get from your lips would make me so happy as to hear that you did not believe my call was a genuine one."

"I will be honest with you, my son," was her loving reply.

Ferdinand went to his chill attic with a light heart, and was asleep almost as soon as his head touched the pillow, so gratefully does an easy conscience reward one.

The following afternoon he started with his mother for his appointment. It was a clear day in February with a sharp wind coming down from the frozen north, but they were well inured to frost, and, thanks to Harold Bowdoin's generosity, they were well equipped to resist it; but they scarcely gave the weather a thought, for their minds were concentrated on the approaching service, especially the sermon that Ferdinand was going to preach. Before they came in sight of the schoolhouse, which had to serve for church, they saw sledge-loads of people and others on foot going in the same direction.

"It looks as if you were going to have a full house," Mrs. Lee said encouragingly.

"There might not be so many if I came the second time."

"That remains to be seen," was the guarded reply.

They were soon at the door and found a dozen or more teams hitched among the evergreens that sheltered the schoolhouse. One of the trustees stepped up to salute the young preacher.

"I doubt if all the folk can get in," he said

anxiously. "It is a new thing to have preaching in the settlement, and, beside, there is a curiosity to hear one so young. Folks are coming in from neighbouring settlements; some of the young men went round this morning to let the people at a distance know about it."

Ferdinand's face took a deeper tint than the north wind warranted, but he secured his horse and entered the schoolhouse with apparent calmness.

To take his place at the teacher's desk, which had been arranged for a pulpit, required as much nerve as to go into a battle, but he went with the curious glances of old men and maidens, elderly women and children alike bent upon him. The clock above the teacher's chair pointed to the hour, and, without waiting for later additions to his congregation, he opened the service. Who was to be precentor did not occur to him; the people stood up when the hymn had been read and then there was a pause; no one seemed ready to lead the singing. Ferdinand's face expressed deep anxiety: he might follow in the lead of others, but to start a tune was quite beyond his power. The young people were beginning to giggle the more seriously inclined to look uncomfortable, when his mother, with a pale face, started a tune, but the metre was wrong, and she broke down on the second line. He saw tears in her eyes—his poor mother, how badly she must feel! for tears did not come readily to her. An old man with a somewhat villainous cast of countenance, back by the stove, reaching over and grasping a neighbour's hymn-book, started out in a harsh, cracked voice, inter-

rupted by a rasping cough, to lead the singing. Ferdinand hardly knew whether to feel grateful or not, but his mother joined in, helped presently by one and another of the congregation, so that by the time the sixth verse was sung, for it was a long hymn, and announced without limitations, the precentor's voice could scarcely be heard. They seemed to enjoy the singing, and by a wise instinct, Ferdinand decided to keep them singing while the late-comers were getting seated. He gave out a well-known hymn with a ringing chorus. A bright-faced girl on the front seat, who had just come in started the air, the old precentor looking discomfited, as he was just coughing his way leisurely into the air. Almost all in the room joined in the chorus, and by the time the last verse was concluded there was a look of enjoyment on nearly every face. Some of them had not been in a religious meeting for years, and would not be there now only for the novelty of hearing a youth preach, since such an opportunity might not present itself in all their lives again, for boys in that section of country were not given to such exercises. Ferdinand had never prayed in public; to do so now was just another cross.

There was a ringing in his ears, and a strange feeling came to him, that wheels of time had been reversed, transporting him to that remote past, where a mocking multitude were jeering at a worn figure bending beneath a cross, while he, in his young, brave strength was walking by that One, and ready to bear his cruel burden. The fancy stirred his deepest emotions; his prayer may have been crude,

certainly it was not conventional, but it came from his heart and stirred every one gathered before him. When he rose from his knees he was amazed to find the majority of his congregation in tears. Down the old precentor's face ran a tiny rivulet that surprised those who knew him best more than it did Ferdinand.

"I wonder what has made them weep," the youth said to himself, altogether unconscious of the unusual eloquence that characterised his prayer.

Again he set the congregation singing; he was following the leadings of a power higher than himself; all day he had been asking for this, and now it had come. The congregation sang so heartily, led by this bright-faced girl, Ferdinand was half inclined to resolve the meeting into a service of song, but on second thought he decided to read the Scripture lesson, and give a brief address. He read the chapter reverently, and with such deep feeling, the people listened as attentively as if it were an item from the daily paper. By the time he announced his text, strong lines of sympathy were established between himself and the people. Evidently he firmly believed every word he was saying, and as evidently he was assured of the realities of heaven and hell. He was in dead earnest; the hungry look on some of the faces intently listening to his every utterance stirred his profoundest sympathies. To help these people to find the Pearl of greatest price was the grandest thing he could do this side of heaven.

Those who thought to time him, his mother of the number, found that he spoke precisely twenty-one

minutes; those who did not were inclined to doubt the accuracy of their statement, so short did this sermon appear. Another hymn was sung with great heartiness, and then Ferdinand announced that a half hour could be spared for the congregation to explain what their relationship to God and eternity might be. A look of dismay swept over the faces, but presently Mrs. Lee arose. She was not accustomed to public speaking, since they lived too remote from church to have the privilege of prayer and social meetings, but she had an experience, and, although the telling of it blanched her cheek and set her heart wildly beating, she bravely told what the Lord had done for her in the past, and how she was finding Him better than all earthly friends, or any created good. When she sat down the bright-faced girl sang "Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in Christian love"; and then she spoke, giving a joyous account of her Christian experience. She was more refined in appearance than the people generally. Afterward Ferdinand learned she was a visitor from the city, who had come to hear him preach. Those who knew her best assured any one who waited to listen to them, that, if there was a saint of God walking the earth to-day, it was Ethel Dene. Evidently this service was to her mind, for her face shone with joy. The people, many of them, wept freely while she spoke. When she ceased, moved by the same influence that thus far had guided him, Ferdinand asked if there were any backsliders present, or others who had never been converted, who would like to acknowledge in any way that they wished to be in right relationship with God.

Mr. Sentelle, the old precentor, jumped to his feet. "I was a perfesser of religion for five and thirty years; began when I was twenty, and then got side-tracked on to the devil's ground. I've been a great sinner and a miserable one, for I've never knowed a day's peace since I backslid." The tears were streaming from his eyes, and he looked the picture of contrition, but a neighbour across the aisle started for the door, slamming it after him.

The old man sat down patiently, but the rebuff had wounded him deeply. By this time there was a profound impression in the meeting, and for the rest of the half-hour testimonies were prompt, and to the point. One sweet-looking old lady arose towards the close and exclaimed thankfully: "I never would have believed that the Lord had so many hidden ones up and down these bye-roads. What is there to hinder neighbours like us meeting here every Sabbath to talk to each other of the life to come and help each other on the way there? The Lord must have put it in the dear young man's heart to come here, for some of us have been praying for years for a minister to come and help us. Perhaps if we took up a collection for him he might come every Sunday; the labourer is worthy of his hire, and this dear youth promises to become a labourer that needeth not to be ashamed."

She sat down, and Ferdinand was on his feet in an instant. "I will gladly come if you wish me to, but I will not take any money. I am not worth paying, and beside, it does not cost me anything to come out here."

There was a murmur of approval, the people were

glad to find him so unselfish. Another meeting was announced for the following Sabbath; when the benediction was pronounced. It was nearly dark when they were ready to start for home, while the heavily-drifted roads were none too safe, but no accident befell any of them. Ferdinand and his mother confessed to each other that they had never felt happier. It was one way God has of paying those who work for Him.

CHAPTER XI

A MOTHER'S AMBITIONS

THE following was a busy as well as anxious week with Ferdinand. In addition to his other duties, there was a sermon to prepare for the coming Sabbath. The question kept repeating itself, had he been over-generous of his precious time in offering to come there every week, when his coming meant the preparation of a sermon. He had scarcely comprehended the fact that voices other than his own might appeal to his inner consciousness. It distressed him that such thoughts should harass him.

"Have I not received great gifts from God, and shall I therefore begrudge this trifling service done in His name?" he asked himself over and over again.

However, he proceeded with his preparation as if it were a part, and a most important part, of his school work, and when Saturday came he took his axe and his manuscript to the woods. The chickadee birds and the squirrels heard his sermon in advance of the people for whom it was prepared. The squirrels grouped around at judicious distances, with their bushy tails held aloft, and their bright eyes twinkling, watching the woodchopper rehearsing his

sermon in the pauses of his toil. What their cogitations were who can say? He went home at night, leaving a part of his luncheon for his mute audience, which act of kindness they probably appreciated more than the sermon. He felt certain now that what he wanted to say to his congregation would come in its regular order, since he had got the principal ideas fixed thoroughly in his memory. It did not occur to him that he might simplify the work by voluminous notes carefully concealed in his Bible; no doubt he thought if he could not remember the sermon himself, it would be unreasonable to expect his hearers to do so. Again his mother went with him, her heart no longer disturbed with anxious forebodings, as on the previous Sunday. She felt assured that her first-born son was destined to become a preacher of whom she would not be ashamed. All this week long she had gone about her daily tasks with a glad heart. She could cheerfully endure the straitness of circumstance and the solitude, because she no longer feared these for her children as she had done for years past. To have her own dun-coloured life repeated in her children had been a melancholy outlook. If some bright day she could slip quietly into one of those fine city churches, of which she had read, and behold her boy, who had struggled so bravely with her through those lean years of her early widowhood, if she could see him in the pulpit holding the vast congregation spell-bound, with the message God gave him to deliver; could she ask for anything nobler? She could wish most of all that he might do men good, rather than

command their admiration; but life had been so churlish in its bestowments, it had caused her to magnify the good things that had been so far beyond her reach. Her nature was full of poetry, she could estimate the splendour of a sunset perhaps as accurately as Ruskin or Tennyson, although she could not express her feelings as fluently. The myriad voices of Nature each had in her heart a corresponding chord. If she had but known it her life was wonderfully full and rich, but the mountain peaks beyond her horizon were unduly magnified. She did not know that the arching heavens above their little farm, with the splendid sweep of suns and planets that roofed them in, and all the myriad cloud-forms with their marvellous tintings, were more overwhelming in majesty than anything this world can show; but one has to travel much and learn some of Nature's profoundest secrets before they make this discovery.

The congregation at Tinker Hill was larger than on the previous Sabbath. It was one of those lovely winter days, nowhere more heartening than in these northern latitudes, where frost and snow hold carnival for months, but where too they make a charming background for a springlike day, when it occasionally comes. The snow was melting on the trees when Ferdinand tied his horse in a cosy alcove among the firs. A chickadee, the cousin perhaps of the ones who shared his sermon and dinner the day before, sat on a bough discreetly observing his movements, and expecting a dinner after his horse had been driven away. The dread of facing so many critical eyes

was less than on the previous Sunday, but the blood was pumping heavily enough through his veins still, to make life anything than a rapture.

He opened the service at once, proceeding in much the same order as before. The singing was hearty; Ethel Dene was there again, her face seeming to reflect an inner illumination. It was evident when he began to preach that his memory was not defective, for what he had prepared with so much care came so spontaneously, the people were beguiled into believing that he made it up on the spot. Again his discourse was brief, he tried to have it as good as he could make it, condensing each thought rather than elaborating, as he noticed some preachers had an unfortunate habit of doing. He was too conscientious to take up the people's time unnecessarily in order that he might extend his remarks over the time usually prescribed.

At the close of the meeting, an old man said to him, no doubt unwisely, for one never can tell how the fine bloom may be destroyed by undue praise: "Young man, you would be as near perfection for a beginner as they make them if you didn't wind up so uncommon sudden."

"I said all I had to say," was the honest reply.

"I've heard most of the great preachers in the States, I've worked there off and on for years, and moved about when I was there considerable, and they seldom run short of thirty-five or forty minutes, and from that on to an hour or more on big occasions."

"They knew a great deal more than I."

"Yes, I'll allow some of them did, but it's not always them as knows most who takes longest to say it. I've heard some mighty small preachers who thinned out their few thoughts over a pretty hefty space of time."

Ferdinand laughed heartily, while he resolved, let him be a preacher, large or small or intermediate, what he had to say should be said in as few words as possible.

The meeting that day was also crowned by testimonies from the people. As the interest deepened one old lady suggested that if a series of meetings could be held, she believed there would be a powerful revival.

Ferdinand trembled. Was he to become an evangelist as well as a preacher, and was this gentle old mother in Israel speaking by Divine inspiration?

He made no reply; while the meeting proceeded satisfactorily to the close. Among other testimonies, old Mr. Sentelle said, with streaming eyes, "This has been the happiest week I've knowed for many a year. People have been dropping dead around us; folks as a rule don't have a long sickness now at the last, as they used to when I was a boy. I've been terrified when my heart give an extray thump, for fear it was going wrong, but this week I've felt as easy as the babe in its mother's arms. I hope the meetings will be kept up, and I'll come as long as I can crawl here."

Ferdinand noticed a heavy frown on neighbour Moore's face, but he did not make a sudden exit from the schoolhouse as on the previous Sabbath; neither did he seem to get the blessing that others claimed to have received.

CHAPTER XII

THE REVIVAL

IT was a mild evening in early June that Ferdinand, after his return from school, took a hasty supper, and dressing himself in a new suit lately forwarded from Harold's clothes press, started for Tinker Hill. Others beside dear old Mrs. Smithson had been asking for some special meetings, and now, when the farmers were through with their seeding, they thought it was the very best time in all the year to begin the work. Rufus had consented to accompany his brother, taking the short way through the woods which cut off a mile or more. Bears were seen occasionally along that woodland path; in hope of meeting one Rufus took his gun. It would be a profitable walk if he could sight a bear and shoot him. To secure eternal life, if he thought of the matter at all, was of far less consequence to the worldly-minded youth. There were no bears visible as they proceeded silently on their way. Ferdinand was busy thinking of the message to his congregation, and if he had been at liberty to converse, their tastes were so different, they had few topics of interest in common. With Rufus, a gun or fishing rod, and the game these might bring,

were far more important than all the poetry over which his elder brother wasted so much valuable time.

When they reached the schoolhouse, they found a good-sized congregation awaiting them. Men and boys were lounging outside the door discussing, for the most part, matters purely secular. Rufus waited outside listening to the flow of conversation, and came to the conclusion that they were not deeply exercised about getting in readiness for a revival, while he could not help pitying his brother, on whom rested the heavy task of bringing these people up to his ideal of Christian character. A sudden thrust of conscience revealed to him that Ferdinand had reason for greater discouragement because of the indifference of the members of his own family to religion. The reflection was a painful one, he dreaded the meeting, and more than all he dreaded hearing the sermon from Ferdinand's lips. The voice of song floated out through the open doors and windows, the men shook the ashes out of their pipes, depositing them carefully in their pockets, then filed decorously into the schoolhouse. Rufus was among the last, and to his chagrin, found the seats nearest the door crowded with men and boys. There was no escape for him but to proceed to the front row, near to the desk where his brother was standing. He never felt quite so unhappy in all his life. Strange thoughts were flocking through his brain, filling him with disquietude which increased as the service proceeded. There were others, besides himself, who were taken possession of by some power hitherto unfelt; nor was this matter for surprise, since there were persons in that

settlement who for some weeks had been more exercised about these approaching services than anything or everything else pertaining to their individual lives.

"The place is so ripe for a revival, it seems as if it would go of itself, without any preacher," Mr. Sentelle remarked at the close of the meeting to Ferdinand. The old man was not given to undue praise to any one; particularly preachers, since he had an impression that they were apt to think better of themselves than their gifts and graces warranted; particularly the more gifted of them.

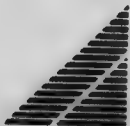
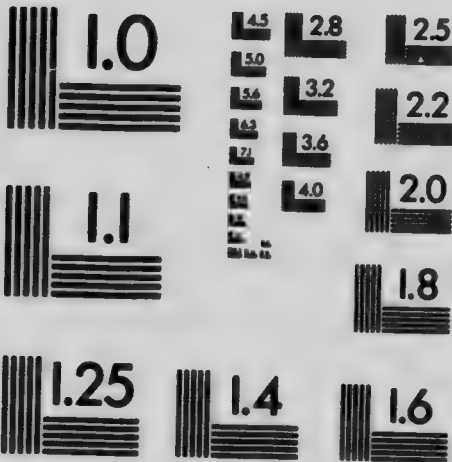
"We should have given the sinners a chance to declare themselves," he continued. "'Twas a grand meeting, with a powerful influence, especially towards the close, after the people began to speak. If you'd only asked the unconverted who wished to be prayed for to stand up there might have been a general turning."

"Every chance was given that a reasonable sinner could ask for," Widow Grey said defensively. "What do the sinners expect? I don't know what more any of us could do than we did to-night."

"We read of nursing fathers, and nursing mothers. I expect the prophets in Bible times had revivals, but I guess they did more than set on their seats and tell sinners they'd better turn to the Lord. You read what Jeremiah and the littler prophets did, and Ezekiel—I was reading only the other day about the victuals he was ordered to eat for three hundred and ninety days for a sign to the rebellious House of Israel."



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"You ought to have been a preacher yourself, Mr. Sentelle," Mrs. Grey responded. "You know so well how things should be done."

Ferdinand looked troubled; this the widow was quick to observe. Later she explained to a sympathising friend, "If Mr. Sentelle can't encourage the poor boy who preaches to us for nothing, at least he should not discourage him. He don't pretend to be a great evangelist, but just like one of ourselves. For my part, I thought it was one of the best meetings I was ever in, and I was that happy I can't begin to describe, when that old man came along and upset me—he has such a gift for nagging."

"Why don't you speak to him about the mistake he is making?" was the response.

"Indeed, I did give him a sound talking to as we came down the road together. I told him he'd a sight better stay home and pray for sinners than come to meeting to discourage the few that are trying to bring about a reformation."

"Some people can never do any good in their own neighbourhood, their lives have been so poor."

"Yes, and Mr. Sentelle is one of them, but he seems to forget, now that he has got stirred up a little, what a crooked path he has made all these years."

Ferdinand had enjoyed the meeting, and had felt encouraged for the nights that were to come, but Mr. Sentelle's dismal remarks had cast him down, sending him on his moonlit walk across the meadows and through the dim aisles of the green wood with spirits unusually depressed.

He overtook Rufus, who was waiting for him at the

stille. The latter was far from satisfied with himself. There had come to him that evening the call for service, for preparation also for the long eternity of which frequent mention had been made. He was not willing, by any means, to become a Christian just then, neither did he feel safe to risk his chances for the future, but yet he was extremely unwilling to have Ferdinand speak to him on the subject.

He had made up his mind, if religious topics were introduced, to plunge, gun in hand, into the dark wood, preferring to brave whatever dangers might be lurking there, than a conversation on the matter of his soul. Ferdinand was tired and considerably depressed, consequent upon his conversation with Mr. Sentelle, and had little heart for further Christian work that night ; beside which, he had an instinctive feeling that a stranger, rather than himself, was best-suited to press the question of salvation upon this self-confident worldly-minded brother.

CHAPTER XIII

A MISSIONARY SPIRIT

FERDINAND for the next few weeks found his work a heavy tax on mind and body. He not only walked fourteen miles each day, but prepared an address for the evening meeting, and, in addition, kept up with his classes at school. At last he made up his mind that either the school or the meetings must be given up. He was loth to do either. The meetings continued to gain in interest; there were so many now to take part that it was only necessary for him to give a brief opening address.

"I did not for one moment think there would be such a work in our settlement, or that the Lord had so many witnesses here all these years," one of the speakers said one evening.

Mr. Sentelle was on his feet in an instant.

"Maybe we were the Lord's witnesses all the time, but it is my opinion we were dangerously near the devil's territory. I know I was, and, whether you'll believe me or not, I can testify that now I am on safe ground."

There was a meaning smile on several faces as the old man sat down, as much as to say, "Time will tell." Twelve months from that time he was as far back on the devil's territory as ever. Perhaps he had not got the right touch from the Master, or else his was a case of the stony-ground hearer described in the parable of the sower. The meetings were continued for three weeks; the interest grew from night to night. Rufus never went again; the charm of the visible world was too strong for him; he failed to comprehend that the best gifts of all worlds belong to the genuine Christian, and to him alone.

What now was to be done with these converts? Half a dozen different churches were represented by nominal adherents in the settlement, and all had been working in utmost harmony. If a minister were called in to form a church, a division, it was feared, would be the immediate result, while the people's minds would most assuredly be diverted from more important questions.

Ferdinand could continue coming until he left for college, while those who wished could go to Surrey for baptism and the Lord's Supper. The services closed quietly; a midweek prayer meeting was established in addition to the service on Sunday afternoon, and for the two following years Ferdinand was with them twice each week whenever possible. He was not discouraged by thin congregations, for the house was generally comfortably filled. There were no playhouses or dram-shops in that primitive community; they were so happy as to have no place to visit if they left their own firesides, save a neighbour's

house and the meetings, but with these they were for the most part fairly well content.

The weeks flowed peacefully along on the river of time, until the last week came that Ferdinand was to be with them. It was a glorious September day. He took the meadow path that led through the shady woodland. His thoughts were happy as he reviewed those two and a half years, reflecting on the change that had been wrought in the people living up and down those quiet country lanes. How thankful he felt that he had listened to the call that stormy winter's day! How much more had been accomplished than he had dreamed of seeing done! The family altar had been established in a score of homes; some of the young men had gone away to seek their fortunes in other places, some had secured a foothold in the largest cities of the continent, and were working there for other worlds than this.

Two young people in the settlement were studying in order to offer themselves for the mission field—one a daughter of Widow Grey, who had been one of the first converts in the revival; the other a youth whose mother, grieving because her sphere was so narrow, had tried all the harder to do well the work that was allotted to her, and had trained her children so wisely that her firstborn was eager to go out and work for others. The way looked exceedingly dark for these young people, but Ferdinand encouraged them by relating his own experience, assuring them that, if the Lord wanted them among His workers, a way would be provided if they did their share. They were trying conscientiously to do this, working and

studying each day in turn as if they expected to become millionaires through their efforts instead of underpaid toilers on some distant mission field.

Six years later they were both at college—Mina Grey studying to become a medical missionary, and George Thorold equally busy preparing himself for the Chinese work, to which he felt strongly drawn, although he had never once looked into the gentle face of a solitary Chinaman.

Tinker Hill, by Act of Parliament, had changed its name, and chosen instead the more suitable one of Wakefield, for, said the one who proposed it, "Surely we have become thoroughly awakened from our old sleepy state, as proved by the fact that we are helping two of our young people through college to become missionaries."

This certainly was the case; these close-fisted farmers had so far outgrown their old characteristics that they cheerfully contributed of their substance to this gracious end. After mature deliberation they had decided to continue the meetings themselves after Ferdinand's departure. There were so many earnest-hearted young people to help in the work they felt strong enough to go on, for a time at least, alone.

One brother had suggested, when the question of hiring a minister was mooted, that, while the Lord called their young people to become missionaries, they would do without the luxury of a pastor, and use the money to educate these consecrated boys and girls.

"Our farms," he continued, "are none too produc-

tive, and farm produce does not bring large prices, so that, if we send out missionaries, we can't do much else in the Lord's vineyard but keep ourselves in the right way."

"We can do as we have been doing for the last two years," another remarked—"go to Surrey for baptism and the Lord's Supper, and any of the preachers will be only too glad to come here for a marriage; while, if we die, I would sooner have one of my neighbours say a few words and offer a prayer above my poor, worn-out body than any strange minister, no matter how eloquent he might be."

A few strongly desired the minister to be hired, but the voice of the majority was peaceably heeded, while they gave their tenth or fiftieth, as the case might be, to helping the young students. As the years went by, what pride they came to take in these young people they were educating! Their success at college was chronicled from house to house, and when at last their preparation was completed and a couple of the great mission boards sent each of them out, there was universal jubilation throughout the entire bounds of Wakefield, some of the old saints remarking that it seemed to them like the clear dawn of the millennium.

George Thorold went to China, while Mina Grey devoted herself to the suffering women of India. That May day, in the midst of cropping, one of the busiest in all the year to the farmers, when the farewell meeting was held, and ministers came from Weston and Surrey and other adjacent villages to attend the farewell exercises, those who had given

their money—sometimes, it may be feared, a little grudgingly, and with some at heavy sacrifice—felt now that they were getting their principal back again, and the interest would be coming in, perhaps for some thousands of years to come; certainly it would not cease until the last white-souled Chinese or Indian would pass through the gates of pearl, who had got there through the influence of these two, which would last possibly for a score of generations, or it may be to the close of time.

The example set by these two young people, and ultimately their reports from the mission field, describing the bitter need of those teeming millions, set other young hearts beating with missionary fervour, so that Wakefield promised to become a fruitful missionary producing field. The young people caught the enthusiasm, and there grew a generous rivalry among them as to who should have the most money to give at the yearly meeting, when subscriptions were received and the subscribers' names announced. Beginning with the wild strawberries in June, they hunted for berries in meadow and pasture all the summer through, selling them to the people in the neighbouring villages, and laying away a proportion of their earnings for the cause so popular in the entire community. Some of the boys had to go barefoot the whole summer, as well as the girls, while the candy so dear to children's hearts had to be sacrificed to the heathen brothers and sisters on the far side of the earth; but they seldom complained, and on that midsummer day when Ferdinand Lee was sure to be with them, his eyes shining as if some

hidden, incommunicable rapture was flooding his hear' as he heard the names and donations announced on their annual missionary day, they not only reviewed their past sacrifices with complacency, but resolved to pick berries still more industriously.

Ferdinand was as deeply interested in all these enterprises as the prospective missionaries themselves, and seemed indifferent as to which of the great evangelical Churches they were allied with. He promised fair to belong to that class of men who shall take the helm in the twentieth century, so broad were his sympathies, so unselfish his Church preferences. The success of God's Kingdom meant far more to him than anything else.

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CHAPTER XIV

SCHOOL WORK ENDED

THE long term of study, covering many years of hard work, left Ferdinand less robust than when he started out from home. Taking his first long holiday, and leaving books and mental work severely alone, he undertook to build up the physical man. His brothers were grown now to stalwart manhood, with as keen a relish for work as Ferdinand, but they preferred manual work to that of the brain. As a result of their industry, the green wood was transformed into smiling meadows and grain fields. A pretty cottage had replaced the well-ventilated house which had been built at a time when warmth in construction was not seriously considered ; this may have accounted in part for the healthy faces of each member of the household.

"Ferdinand has studied all the red out of his blood," Rufus said with fine scorn, when his brother came home, looking very attenuated in comparison with his brothers and sisters. The pure air and wholesome food of the farmhouse soon, however,

brought a tinge of colour to his cheek and a robustness to the frame that cheered his mother's heart.

In place of books Ferdinand interested himself in farm work. The homely pursuits which occupied the thoughts of his brothers, and from which they certainly appeared to extract genuine satisfaction, interested him. As he compared life here with that of cities he realised that the farmer has his compensations, which are unknown to the busy toiler, whether of brain or hand, in the crowded cities.

"If only there could be an interchange of the best gifts held by each, the ideal life might be realised," he wrote to his friend Harold, as he described his impressions of farm life.

When the day's work was done, and they rested on the shady verandah, with what interest his brothers discussed the duties of the coming day, laying careful plans whereby to extract her best gifts from mother earth! Already these busy bees were preparing to swarm. Rufus had bought another farm a few miles farther on into the depths of the country; the next year his house was to be built, and then the bride whose promise he had secured long before, was to be brought home.

Ferdinand had received his call to a pastorate. In fact he had received two calls: the first had been given a year ago and came from his friends at Wakefield; the other from an aristocratic city Church.

He had come home undecided which to accept. Harold Bowdoin, to whom he had reported his perplexity, urged him to accept the Fayette Avenue invitation.

"At your formative age," he urged, "the intercourse with clever men and women will develop your powers amazingly. To understand their temptations will make you pitiful towards their failings; where others might grow discouraged you will try to help. Take it for a year, and then, if you feel free to do so, you can return to Wakefield and vegetate to your heart's content."

"I need not vegetate," said Ferdinand. "If I go there, work in plenty will be ready for me to do which will keep me very much alive."

"You need the stress and strife of the crowded ways of men, to bring you to your best. So take my advice; you will thank me some day."

To refuse advice from Harold Bowdoin was impossible unless conscience interfered, and in this matter conscience was rather on the side of Harold and Fayette Avenue; but at his age, to take charge of such a Church was next thing to martyrdom. He had officiated as supply for them one summer during the pastor's absence in search of the health he had never found, for that winter he had migrated to a country where the inhabitants never say, "I am sick."

They had remained without a pastor all these months, waiting until Ferdinand would be ready to undertake the charge. That he should hesitate for an instant over such a flattering call, did not once occur to any of them.

There was something about this shy, and, it must be confessed, rather awkward youth, that possessed a strong fascination for these worldly people. There was a freshness and quaint simplicity, and withal, a

virile strength not usually found in so young a man, that brought to mind the quiet country places where many of them had spent their earlier years ; but more than this, his fearlessness in the pulpit, and his honesty, appealed to these people, many of whom were sick at heart of the shams and hollowness of fashionable society.

One enthusiastic matron remarked, at a fashionable luncheon where his name had been mentioned as the probable successor of Dr. Latham, "He might have been one of the blessed eleven who followed our Lord over hill and valley, under the Syrian skies." "I believe he would be braver than they were," commented another. "I can't conceive of him forsaking his Master under any circumstances. I know by the look on his face, when he sits at the desk before preaching, that it is a crucifixion to face the crowd of worldlings before him ; but he is the bravest of any who come to us." While still another said : "I have hard work to control my feelings, when I have looked into his boyish face as he talks of hell, the judgment day, and subjects not often introduced into fashionable pulpits."

Ferdinand was ignorant of all this praise ; it is doubtful if it would have had the effect of reconciling him to the work of leading them in matters spiritual. The decision was left open to him until September. Wakefield had also repeated the call given months before.

Which should he accept ?

"You have done your work in Wakefield," his mother suggested when he consulted her on the

decision he should make. "Harold Bowdoin's advice impresses me as sensible; beside, there is the question of salary. The settlement folk have done wonders without a pastor. What it would have cost them to keep a minister all these years has been expended on their young people. There are several more who are anxious to become missionaries. If you become their pastor the way will be blocked, for the money they pay you will be taken from them, while if you go to New York you will be able to educate them yourself. You can live as simply as you please, and there is no need for petty martyrdoms in the matter. I have no patience with those people who go through life misunderstood, when an honest confession as to what they do or spend would set them right with the public."

"Would you have me tell them why I lived cheaply?"

"Certainly. Why should you not be as just in that respect to yourself as you would be to another?" was his mother's emphatic reply.

"I might find it hard to make the explanation. One does not like to boast about their good works."

"Boasting and explaining are very different. If you go to Fayette Avenue Church, you will have a new talent entrusted to you, and a large one. Money is something that has been withheld from our family. Our people have been in moderate circumstances as far back as I know anything about them. Born of poor but honest parentage for many generations can be written in your obituary notice."

"I have an impression it is the finest ancestry a human being can have."

"It may be so, but for my part there were times, when my children were little and the question of bread and covering was uncertain, I would gladly have had more money and taken the risks that money brings."

"You brought us through nobly," said he, with a loving look.

"The Lord helped me. Many a time I would have given up in despair, when the pantry was nearly empty and no money in my purse. I look back now upon those years and wonder at myself. The year after your father was taken was the hardest: many a time I have been so weak with hunger that I could hardly keep at my work, but I managed to get enough for my children. It seemed as if there was always almost enough, and when there was a scarcity I did without."

"Mother!" What a world of meaning there was in that word as Ferdinand uttered it. For the first time he knew what sacrifices his mother had made to keep her children about her. To make her declining years beautiful should be one of the tasks he would set himself. "I will go to New York, mother; I see my duty clearly."

CHAPTER XV

FAREWELLS

HAROLD BOWDOIN visited the Lees for a few days towards the close of August. Early in September Ferdinand was to assume charge of the Fayette Avenue Church. Harold was jubilant: that his adopted brother was to begin his pastorate at a salary of five thousand dollars a year was next to a miracle. That he should have hesitated a moment puzzled him, especially with Wakefield as an alternative at five hundred dollars a year. Indeed, after diligent canvassing, the most that could be secured was four hundred and sixty-two dollars beside the Sabbath collections. But this represented vastly more self denial for this scattered flock in the wilderness, than the five thousand so easily given by the other Church. To raise this sum in addition to their missionary enterprises meant for them many scant dinners and shabby garments.

Ferdinand had been preaching for them the whole summer through, both morning and evening; and had been giving them the very best that it was in

him to bestow. People came from adjacent settlements and went thoughtfully on their way, not exclaiming so much at the speaker's oratory as at their own lack of service to their Creator.

Harold Bowdoin walked with him through the fragrant woodland that last Sabbath at Wakefield. It was for the most part a silent walk; for Ferdinand always felt it such a solemn business to talk to men about their souls, that for hours before he was to preach he wanted to be alone, talking only with God.

Harold had not heard him preach for some years, the greater part of Ferdinand's vacations having been spent away from his native place, supplying the vacant pulpits of ministers who were taking their much-needed summer holidays. In this way he had added very materially to his income, whereby he had been enabled to promote the comfort of his mother and the other members of the family.

It was a red-letter day for Harold. To be with this healthy-minded family, who craved recognition from the county magnates scarcely more than from the beings who inhabit the fixed stars, was a revelation of how strong-hearted some human beings become. Added to this, the spirit of peaceful gladness that exhaled from the mother like an atmosphere, with the genial kindness of the brothers and sisters, made the home seem wellnigh perfect, although it lacked the elegancies by some considered so necessary to complete the ideal home.

Crowning all his satisfaction, was this beautiful Sabbath day and the silent walk with his friend through the meadows, vocal with insect life, and

under the over-arching trees, while every moment brought him nearer to the sermon he had been so impatient to hear.

He kept wondering if the higher education of the universities had robbed Ferdinand of the fervour that had been one of his striking characteristics. He was gratified, when the moss-grown path had been left for the dusty highway, to see the many groups of people in their Sunday garments, hastening churchward; while a goodly array of vehicles, filled with expectant worshippers, were moving in the same direction.

A new church, long talked of, had at last become a reality, although it was still in a transitional state; the roof having been shingled, the walls boarded, and rude benches sufficing for present needs. The people had worked hard to get it in readiness for Ferdinand's farewell sermon. When he and Harold entered the already well-filled building; the question where to bestow the late comers was puzzling other heads than Harold's. The news had spread that Ferdinand had received a call at five thousand dollars a year; to hear a preacher who commanded such a salary was a new experience to the most of them; the crowd drawn to the new church from affection and curiosity was larger, probably, than it would see duplicated in many a long year.

Harold, by some judicious crowding, secured a seat where he had a good view of the speaker. Probably no other person present was so deeply interested, not even Ferdinand's own mother, who, with all her family, had long since secured comfortable vantage ground, from which to behold preacher and

people. Rufus had brought the express, and was sitting now at the end of the bench, his interest strongly divided between the great congregation and a rosy-faced maiden, who occasionally bestowed shy glances in return for his bolder ones. This was the one with whom he had elected to make the life journey. She lived some miles away in an older settlement, and would bring to the new home abundant stores of household effects, the result of her own industry and the parental thrift.

To hear her future brother-in-law preach had brought out all the available members of her family, and each was ready to receive whatever reflected honour might fall to them. The opening exercises were delayed by the crowding at the door; the men were busy constructing fresh seats, boards being plentiful, but at last want of space forbade further effort, and those outside must content themselves with what they could gain of the sermon from the open windows and doors.

Harold beamed hearty approval upon the throng of listeners. Surely it meant much for his friend's power over human hearts; and since these latter are constructed on similar lines, whether palpitating under broadcloth or homespun, the dwellers in cities would be equally eager to hear his message.

Quiet gained at last, Ferdinand began the service. The people were never quite sure of the order in which it would come, and neither was he himself quite certain. Sometimes he opened his meeting with singing, more often with an impassioned prayer for Divine help. This prayer, unlike the usual

formal invocations, was often his most lengthy petition. Old Mr. Sentelle had been heard to complain on certain occasions that the prayer was longer than the sermon.

"I timed him by my watch many's the time," he was wont to remark somewhat complainingly. He liked his religious worship to be conducted as he had been accustomed to have it since his boyhood.

This service was no exception to the general rule ; many things conspired to make it a memorable occasion to the preacher. For several years he had, as opportunity permitted, ministered to these people, between whom and himself there existed an unusually strong bond of friendship ; this was to be the last time he would be with them for an indefinite period. Harold Bowdoin was present, and his was a stimulating presence ; and then the great crowd of eager listeners appealed to his dramatic instincts ; he was still young-hearted enough to have strong enthusiasms. His own eyes were full of tears as he urged the people's needs, therefore it was not strange that other eyes were wet. Harold never had felt such an uncomfortable tightness in his throat before ; he was forced at last to follow the general example and wipe away the tears that kept filling his eyes.

"He won't be able to give us much of a sermon after such a prayer as that ; it isn't in human nature to do it," Mr. Sentelle remarked to Harold, who sat beside him. He knew the latter was Ferdinand's benefactor, and so chose his phrases accordingly.

How beautifully these people sing ! Harold reflected, as he stood encompassed by the heavy

volume of sound. The voices, though untrained, were musical ; there were some grand bass notes distinctly audible above the sharp soprano voices, and just behind him was a tenor voice that would be a small fortune to its possessor if he had the opportunity of judicious training.

Harold glanced round and saw a fair-haired young man with a refined face, but hands roughened by toil. There came to him the desire to rescue this young fellow from a life certainly not in harmony with the intention of his Creator. A few hundreds of dollars expended on him might enable him to earn thousands later on.

The hymn was ended, the Scripture lesson read, and directly the text was taken. It was a strangely ordered programme, but there was little time for mental criticism, for Ferdinand had plunged headlong into his discourse. As he listened, Harold no longer wondered that the officials of Fayette Avenue showed such eagerness to secure this preacher. He was a thoroughly original speaker, and one who felt deeply, not only the responsibility of his office, but the effect that each sentence should have on the hearts of his hearers. There was not a single unnecessary word, no reiterating of ideas, continual progress was made from the opening sentence to the close ; but this was not the reason the sermon took such hold of the congregation, Harold could well believe. Rufus moved uneasily in his seat, as the voice of the speaker grew more tender, and his words more solemn ; he was speaking now of the loss to the individual of Christ's presence with him in all the joys as well as

perplexities of his earthly career, of the bitter, unknowable loss to be deprived of His presence forever. Mr. Sentelle had forgotten to refer to his watch; when the sermon was ended he drew it forth softly, exclaiming, "Blest if it ain't nigh on to five o'clock! He must have been talking for over an hour, an' I never once sensed how long he was."

Harold drew out his own watch incredulously. Surely Mr. Sentelle's time was astray; but no, there on his own dial the hands were pointing to ten minutes to five. The benediction was pronounced after a brief prayer, leaving Harold no further chance to hear his neighbour's superb tenor. A shorter sermon and another hymn might have been the means of revolutionising a life, Harold having forgotten all about the tenor and the plans beginning to form in his brain as he listened to his voice; but Paul Reeves was an earnest Christian, so one day he may stand with the Seraphim and sing.

CHAPTER XVI

FAYETTE AVENUE CHURCH

FERDINAND had come to his work early in the week, in order to be present at the two weeknight services, although this act of grace on his part had not been expected. It was the custom with new-coming pastors to make their first appearance on the Sabbath morning. However, Ferdinand had come and taken his place as leader of each of the meetings, the former by special and pressing invitation of the appointed leader, the latter by right as pastor. Some of his flock had gone away from these first two services, far from satisfied with his addresses and methods of conducting their weeknight meetings.

In the first place, he had changed the stereotyped programme; the young people depended largely on singing to fill up the hour, especially at the beginning. A good many expected to get their hearts in tune for the exercises in this way. But in this meeting Ferdinand only gave out one hymn, and that one of the most heart-searching in the collection; the prayer which followed was not the usual brief invocation they were accustomed to have from their leaders, but a

passionate cry for help from the Infinite Helper of human souls. It gave to most of them the uncomfortable conviction that they were only playing at religion; they could scarcely recall a single act of genuine cross-bearing, as his words typified it. The address that followed the prayer was equally awakening. He assured them that mere attendance on the means of grace was not worship. "For some of you," he said, "the young people's meeting is a trysting place with the human rather than the Divine. Probably you may repeat a verse of Scripture infinitely beyond anything you have ever experienced, while many do not say anythir . . . When I lead this meeting, which I am told that I am expected to do on certain occasions, I shall make room for every one of you to tell frankly what is your attitude towards God. We do not want any silent partners, they are usually a source of weakness; an elderly woman once confessed to me that the silent members in the Church made the act of public confession harder for her than anything else. I shall not limit you in regard to time: if the Spirit of God is with us we may remain together a couple of hours; those who wish to leave are at liberty to do so during the singing. If a meeting proves lifeless, we will not remain together for half an hour. It is not worship, trying to fill in a certain number of minutes. We will endeavour to be honest in this as in other things; honest in every fibre of our being." His address was assuredly far from eloquent, and it was brief. If they had a minimum of singing, how was the remainder of the hour to be filled, if they were debarred from quoting

some splendid text or harmonious line of poetry? There was dead quiet for a space, after which the meeting was opened for testimonies; Ferdinand stood quietly surveying the quaking ranks of professed disciples, not one of whom had the courage to break the ominous silence. The courage required to stand up and say a few words in a meeting is sometimes as great as that required to storm a fort.

Ferdinand opened the hymn-book; he was going to close the meeting, when a young girl arose; her face was pale and every nerve was quivering. "I am assuredly not ashamed of my Lord, but of myself. Our pastor has described my religious experience so accurately to-night that I feel I must go back to first principles. I am determined to belong to Christ. I want to make sure that I am on the right way." She sat down amid a stillness that could be felt. These decorous, self-satisfied young people were getting a rude awakening, while Jean Mason's confession dovetailed into each individual's experience. Again, a painful silence ensued, with which, strange to say, Ferdinand was better pleased than if a score of glibly uttered Scripture verses had been rehearsed. A young man on the back seat arose; a comrade sitting beside him confessed afterwards that the form on which they sat quivered beneath him, so extreme was his friend's emotion. He broke down utterly as he made confession of his death in life, but with radiant face, exclaimed later on that his load of guilt was gone. Ferdinand no longer felt anxiety about the meeting, the Holy Spirit had taken charge. And now how easy it had become for these young people

to speak, while it was in their own language, and not the experience of psalmist or prophet, both of which are excellent in their way, but as a rule much beyond what is felt by pleasure-loving city youths. With unruffled serenity, Ferdinand observed the hands of the clock approaching ten o'clock. When at last he pronounced the benediction, there were some who were sorry to have the meeting, so unique in their experience, brought to a close. Others, however, were indignant, and went home filled with strong dissatisfaction, whether against themselves, or pastor, no one was quite certain.

When the Friday evening prayer-meeting opened, seats that had been vacant for many a year were filled. Such contending reports concerning Tuesday's meeting had gone out, saint and sinner were alike curious to see how the meeting would be conducted, and if this young man, so original in his methods of worship, and so brave in his denunciations, would take so high a hand with the older members of his flock. The atmosphere was electrical when he stood up with the open hymn-book in his hand. They did not know that their pastor had spent many hours in prayer about this service, and had the answer that help would be granted. His opening address was brief but searching. Some of the prayer-meeting orators scarcely knew whether to condemn themselves or their pastor's words; one or the other was certainly astray. When the meeting was thrown open there was an ominous silence, Ferdinand with a troubled mind stood regarding his people. Here were souls before him utterly unready for that journey, "their

longest and their last," and yet they might be called to make it in an hour, and henceforth he believed that he was to a considerable extent responsible for the appearance they would make at the end of their course. He had an impression that God still keeps as close reckoning with His shepherds as in Ezekiel's time. He bowed his head in prayer, a horror of great darkness enveloped him; the burden of his message was becoming unbearable. The people assembled in that vestry will remember to their dying day the prayer that fell from his lips. Christian living suddenly ceased to be the holiday journey they had been making it, but a task the most serious a human being can compass. Compared with many a devout heathen, their service to the King of kings was a solemn farce. The prayer ended; there was another ominous pause; the young ladies presiding at the piano and reed organ fidgeted nervously. If the minister would only call for a song! He was utterly devoid of tact in the management of a prayer-meeting, they hastily decided, not comprehending that to his mind silence was preferable to empty worship. At last, a hymn was given out, and with it liberty to speak or pray. He did not urge, but left the matter with their own consciences. No one responded, and after a pause, he lifted his hand to pronounce the benediction, when an elder sprang to his feet. "Our Church will be disgraced by such a prayer-meeting as this," he said huskily. "For my own part, I confess that I never realised as I do at this moment the poor service I have been offering to the Lord. If our church was well filled on the Sunday and our coffers in a healthy

condition, I was satisfied, and if I gave it a thought at all, it was that our candlestick was in its place and the candle burning all right. I see things differently now; I thank God the clearer vision did not come to me in a dying hour, or when I come to appear before my Judge."

He sat down in a hush that could be felt, when another stood up with much the same confession on his lips, and then an elegantly apparelled woman arose, her garments more suited to the playhouse or ball-room than a prayer-meeting. She was young and beautiful. "I came here from curiosity, and am engaged for a far different gathering an hour hence—an engagement I no longer mean to keep. Our pastor's prayer revealed my life to me; I was never awakened from my death-sleep before. You all know me—know what a gay, light-hearted creature I have been—selfish, proud, careless of the interests of my own and every other unsaved soul. I thank God first of all, and our pastor next, for his fearless words. I wish every Christian looked at these matters in the same way; we are sinned against, as well as sinners."

She spoke with profound earnestness—gay, bright Helen Cleveland—a society belle, rich, aristocratic, exclusive. If a bomb had burst in their midst it could hardly have produced greater surprise; but the end was not yet. It was not customary for women to take part in the Friday evening meeting; a few elderly men were in the habit of supplementing the leader's exercises, the women as a rule contenting themselves with expressing their hopes and fears in song, those of them who could sing; the remainder

offered their praises inarticulately, if at all. Helen Cleveland had scarcely taken her seat when a white-haired, sweet-faced woman on a front seat arose and said with trembling lips—

"Our young friend has opened the way for every woman here. When she has been brave enough to make her confession I should feel under strong condemnation if I did not say how kind a friend I have found the Lord Jesus to be. With the Lord's help I am going to begin my Christian life anew. I do not want to waken on my deathbed to find that my Christian experience has come short in the supreme moment."

After Mrs. Grenfell sat down there was not a moment lost; sometimes two and three were on their feet at once waiting their turn to make confession—since it was, for the most part, a confessional service. Neither did they seem to heed the flight of time. It was ten o'clock when the benediction was pronounced—the longest prayer-meeting in the history of the Church, while there was not a formal testimony or petition from the two-score persons who took part therein.

CHAPTER XVII

MRS. ARNOT'S CALL

FERDINAND had been installed pastor for a year. Even his senior deacon believed that the early fervour of the prayer-meetings could not be expected to continue. It was not in human nature, he said sententiously, to abide continually in those sublime altitudes of Christian experience; he was forced to acknowledge his mistake when several months had elapsed and the religious fervour of the weeknight services had grown deeper instead of abating. Now there was no one who would be more sorry than he to see the Church drift back into the old sluggish currents of the past. Ferdinand was more interested in the state of the prayer-meetings than his preaching services. A thin house on the Friday evening would cause him more heart-searching than on the Sabbath, but there was not much danger of either from present indications. An old Scottish proverb has it "that a housegoing pastor makes a churchgoing people." If this were true, then Ferdinand's people should certainly be churchgoers, for his hours each day for visiting were as methodically arranged as those for

study, and as faithfully observed. Neither were his visits brief calls with a few words of church gossip, rounded by a formal prayer.

"We have a conference meeting every time the minister comes to our house, and it is twice as dreadful as the regular one when all the Church are supposed to be present," Mrs. Reynolds remarked one day to a visitor who was a member of another fold.

"How does he conduct the meeting?"

"Oh, he examines into my poor experience as if he were a veritable soul doctor, but I always feel wonderfully lighthearted after he has gone. It is like a dose of bitter medicine or the surgeon's knife; the results tend to spiritual healthfulness."

"He is young for such prophet-like faithfulness," Mr. Arnot said thoughtfully.

"He is young in years, certainly, but not in the courage of his convictions. We never had any one like him in that respect, and although he is so brave in denouncing our sins, he is the most diffident, retiring creature I ever saw outside his sacred office. He confessed to Deacon Eldridge that the call to preach was for him the call to martyrdom, and even worse, for he could have stood the flames for an hour or two, and that would have been the end of it, but preaching year after year until he is eighty is worse than fire or sword."

"Poor fellow! What a dreary life for him!"

"Well, he seems happy, notwithstanding his dislike for his profession. 'An irksome duty most earnestly performed,' he said in his sermon a short time ago, 'was

only another name for genuine happiness.' He does not preach above our heads, but talks in such a way the ignorant can understand him, only now and then letting his mind have free rein, and then he plunges so deeply into abstract themes the best thinkers are obliged to bestir themselves. I verily believe he likes best to preach in that style, since it is natural to his type of intellect, but for the sake of the dull-witted he denies himself."

"You are very proud of your young minister," Mrs. Arnot said wistfully.

"Yes, we are proud of him, but, what is better, we reverence him. He is our prophet, and we are trying to obey his commands. Sometimes I catch ravishing glimpses of what our Church may become if he is spared to us, of what all our Churches might be like if the ministers were as faithful and gifted as he. The combination, as he possesses it, should work miracles; indeed, it has done so already. His first year is only just completed, and yet we could not have recognised a year ago ourselves as we are to-day, for the excellent reason that we were not well enough acquainted with the Christian character to understand its full possibilities; we are still only beginners in the school of Christ."

"I have a mind to transfer my Church relationship to Fayette Avenue."

"Oh, no, you should not do that, but transfer instead our experience and work to your own Church."

"That is impossible. Dr. Darwin would think me crazy, and so would our members, if I were to talk in

our prayer-meeting as your women do in Fayette Avenue."

"Never mind if they do; that may be the work given you to do. Remember you have great gifts entrusted to you, large means, high social position, culture, and, in addition to all these, persuasive speech. If you were to yield yourself up to God, you might do marvellous things in your Church."

Mrs. Arnot shivered.

"I am beginning to wish that Mr. Lee had never come to New York. His influence is reaching outside the prescribed limits, and making others unhappy beside his own flock."

"He made us unhappy for a while, but for those among us who have heeded his message he has been the means of teaching us what true happiness is. I believe we received religion more as a sort of fire insurance than as something that was to make us happy in this world, and which, better than anything else, was to develop all that was best in us for ever. How completely we have outgrown this idea I cannot explain. It will be necessary for you to have a similar experience in order fully to comprehend how gracious it is."

Mrs. Arnot looked troubled. Curiosity had drawn her, time and again, to the Fayette Avenue prayer-meeting, when suddenly her own conscience was awakened, and the call given to come into line with these earnest disciples, to join their Church and become one with them, was an easy matter; but to attempt to infuse her pastor and fellow-worshippers with a like spirit meant martyrdom for her. Probably

she was not originally constructed for martyrdom ; if she were, lifelong indulgence in worldly pleasure, permitted by pastor and Church members, had so far weakened her moral fibre that anything nearly approaching this high spiritual altitude was beyond her.

"It is no use," she exclaimed at last ; "if I am to become an out-and-out Christian, you must let me join your Church or else give us your pastor. I would gladly exchange ministers with you."

"We will not do that. We discovered Mr. Lee, and we are going to keep him, against all the world. The Church have decided to add a couple of thousand dollars more to his salary. He gives away every dollar over and above his personal expenditure, which, I am told, he reduces to the lowest possible figure compatible with his position as a city minister."

"Who does he give it to?" Mrs. Arnot asked, while she called to mind her own pastor's rapidly increasing bank account. Her husband was his banker and knew exactly his savings, which were greatly in excess of his expenditure.

"He gives to different objects ; he is educating some young folk in his native place who want to be missionaries. He works in the slums. Our Bible-woman is on the watch, and she reports large sums that he lays out on the poor—or large sums for one with his limited income."

"Where does he live?"

"In lodgings, and very plain ones. Shortly after he came here he found a widow who had come from the provinces, and with whom he had boarded when

he was quite a young man. She had been very kind to him, and now he is repaying the old indebtedness by taking rooms with her. She keeps a lodging-house, and says the price he insists on paying for the rooms is out of all proportion to their value. He takes his meals at a restaurant, of which not one of us approves, for restaurant food is not good for man or beast. We try, however, to neutralise its effects by inviting him to our homes. There is seldom a day passes but he is called upon to dine with some of us, which is a threefold gain; it teaches us to be hospitable, gives him nourishing food, and pastor and people get to know each other better."

"It gives him more money to bestow upon others," Mrs. Arnot said with a smile.

The thought of this popular young minister submitting to the discomfort of a second-rate restaurant in order that he might have more money to bestow upon others made her very uncomfortable. She was not in the habit of denying herself anything that a large income could procure, neither was she given to expending much money on the poor. She went home that day more dissatisfied with herself than she had been for many years.

CHAPTER XVIII

MRS. CUNNINGHAM'S QUESTION

"WHY does our minister not get married?" was frequently asked by the ladies of Fayette Avenue congregation. Curiosity deepened as the interest in their pastor grew stronger, and at last one of the sisters decided to get an answer to these troublesome questionings. An excellent dinner was prepared by Mrs. Cunningham, to which Ferdinand was invited. Her husband was afflicted with deafness which, for once, his wife found was a misfortune possessing mitigating circumstances. The dinner had been thoroughly discussed, together with sundry Church enterprises of deep interest to the pastor, when to his surprise the conversation was adroitly turned to the subject of marriage in general, and minister's wedded happiness in particular, and then he was transfixed with the query bluntly propounded, "Why do you not give us a minister's wife, to help us in our work. A gifted, lovely woman would be an amazing help and inspiration to us all."

Mrs. Cunningham had planned to lead the con-

versation gracefully to the interesting question, but her nervousness got the better of her finesse. Her pastor seemed dumbfounded at her question, but with his quaint honesty, and directness of speech, he said quietly, "She died."

"Oh, do you say so? May I ask her name, and if she is long dead?"

"Ethel Dene, and she passed to other worlds four years ago."

"Were you engaged?"

"No, but I meant to be, as soon as I had anything to offer her in the way of a living."

"She knew you loved her?"

"I hope so; at least she knows it now."

"Did she love you?"

How greedy she was for particulars about this most fascinating case! She noticed her pastor's face wore a deeper tinge than usual, but whether bashfulness or some other emotion caused it, she could not rightly divine.

"I have scarcely dared ask myself that question. I did not feel worthy to ask for her love!"

Mrs. Cunningham sat musing in silence for some time. Her husband was nodding drowsily: he was accustomed to an after-dinner nap, but out of deference to their guest was ineffectually trying to fight against custom. Ferdinand had risen, and gone to the window, from which he was intently gazing with unseeing eyes. How many memories these questions had with sharp bitterness awakened! how strange it seemed to have given voice to thoughts that had so powerfully fashioned his past

life, but which had never before been uttered! He had forgotten Mrs. Cunningham and his surroundings, he was standing in that irreclaimable past, with its brief, delirious witchery—its awful desolation. He pulled himself together at last, and turned to his hostess, when he was met with fresh questions.

"You are not going to always wear the willow for your dead love?"

"She is not dead to me, but more acutely alive than any human being I meet."

"Are you a spiritualist?" she asked with some alarm.

"Yes, in the biblical sense."

Mrs. Cunningham was unwilling to acknowledge her ignorance of biblical spiritualism, save for the much-discussed Witch of Endor.

"It is a very great loss for a minister not to have his own home and family."

"It is a greater loss for a man to promise to love one woman, when his heart belongs to another."

"If the other one is dead?"

"What is death?"

Mrs. Cunningham was surprised, but rallying her forces said, "Something we all dread."

"Not all of us, not all." He seemed to be speaking to other than Mrs. Cunningham.

"Well, I never knew any one who was healthy but what had a wholesome dislike for death. Sick people get dying grace sometimes, when they are worn out with pain, and anything seems preferable to their misery, but if even they had the offer of health they would grasp it eagerly, I am firmly convinced."

Ferdinand was silent ; it seemed a waste of breath to argue the matter with one whose spiritual vision was so dim—it was like describing colours to a child who had never seen.

"Then you are not likely to marry soon?" She returned with fresh spirit to the absorbing topic.

"I will let you know when I decide to change my state ; until then we will not discuss the subject further."

It was like showing a person the door ; her chagrin was evident. Ferdinand was relieved that another engagement gave him the chance of drawing this irksome visit to a close. A restaurant dinner would be more to his mind than feasting at this rich woman's table, but life, for the most part, was a discipline, and it was beginning to matter little to him under what form it came. To be hidden in his study, of whose location no one knew, except the sexton ; to have there a long morning with his books and pen, was the chief pleasure of his passing days.

CHAPTER XIX

CLOWNE'S ALLEY

ONE morning Ferdinand, as he prepared his sermon for the coming Sabbath, found the wheels bearing heavily. Throwing down his pen he sallied forth; he knew where work was waiting for him that often saddened, but rarely wearied him. Taking a car, it was not long ere he was in the heart of the slums. A few weeks previously, when a quarter's salary had been paid, he had felt so amazingly rich that he decided to widen his parish.

Twelve hundred and fifty dollars had been such a huge sum to come in every three months, in addition to wedding fees, and gifts from admiring parishioners, that he had undertaken the education of every youth in Wakefield possessed with missionary aspirations, in addition to having so generously enriched the dear ones at home, they had little left to ask for that money could procure.

Not content with this, he was trying to transform Fayette Avenue into an institutional Church, with so many benevolent enterprises that nearly every well-to-do-member might become a commanding officer in

some department. He was a firm believer in a militant Church; the enemy they were to combat—sin—and the multitudinous effects of heaven's violated laws. Of late, in addition to these enterprises, he had gone further afield, taking none of his people into his confidence. He began on ground so vicious, a policeman shadowed him the first few visits; after that no street in the huge city was safer for him than Clowne's Alley. His original methods had been somewhat modified after he became better acquainted with the people. He had a settled conviction that in the most degraded human being there remained some instinct of nobility; but for this belief he could hardly have persevered with some cases he met in that neighbourhood. It had never been a respectable section, it had no clean memories lingering amid its awful gloom; the people, grimy and sodden, were in keeping with their environments. Only an enthusiast might be looked for there as a regenerator. Ferdinand was both, an enthusiast and philanthropist, with a dash of the spirit of prophecy. The latter certainly did not cease at the dawn of the Christian era, when Simeon and Anna departed from earth. He learned lessons as he climbed broken stairways, or knelt beside a heap of mouldy straw, whereon some broken heart was panting out its final misery,—lessons that could not have been learned in the universities, or as the popular pastor of a wealthy Church.

The people in that haunt of sin did not at first comprehend that he was a preacher: the strong, sinewy man with the wonderful eyes that seemed at a

glance to take in all their misery—and, alas! their sin—was different from any slum-worker they had known. They fell into the habit, how acquired they could hardly explain, of calling him Brother Ferdinand! The name was all they knew of him personally, save the heart of sympathy that reached down to the vilest, letting them call him brother; and it sufficed. He was in the habit of dropping in on them unawares, his hands always filled with gifts; sometimes it was a huge basket stocked with food which the grocery clerk helped him to carry through the narrow lane; again it was clothing, always second-hand because it was cheaper, and not so readily pawned for drink. His clientele were not fastidious, and as thankfully accepted a cast-off garment as one direct from the loom. Time was extremely precious with him, hence his visits were brief; but he crowded a good deal into them, not so much advice, or remonstrance, as profoundest pity. Draggled womanhood felt strange throbbings of self-respect as he spoke of what she might yet become—the return of purity, of true womanliness. Blear-eyed men who had sunk lower than the brute, listened as he spoke of the manliness of Christ, which it was theirs to imitate. At first some of them would curse, but after a few visits, won by his patience and subdued by his innate power—they would quietly listen, if nothing more. The generous heart that prompted such lavish giving, helped him more than anything else.

“If he was our own father he couldn’t be better to us, let alone a stranger, that we don’t know any more about than his name; and I’m suspicious it’s only his

christian name he gives—Ferdinand is never a surname” one of the inmates of Bourke’s tenement remarked, in a heated discussion about their strange benefactor. They were all of one mind as to his generosity, but some of the more depraved hinted there must be some hidden motive behind all this assumed goodness.

“It’s not human natur’, not even preacher natur’, for a body like him to perwide for sech as we,” a blear-eyed old woman remarked wisely.

“I’m doubtin’ if he bean’t a preacher,” another elderly female said with a knowing shake of the head. “Afore I comed to this ere sitivation I’m in now, I used to go reglar to chapel in the old country, and I knows parsons’ ways, and if so be some of you was to say, ‘Brother Ferdinand, bean’t you a preacher?’ I warrant he’d say, ‘I be.’”

“I’ll do it, blest if I don’t! and if he’s one of them chaps that holds forth up town, I’ll go some day and hear if he’s any good,” Dapper Jim said. He was a clever rogue who had successfully evaded the police, hitherto living by ways best known to himself, and being the envy of less adroit individuals who, with him, were parasites on society at large.

“I don’t think you’ll find he’s much on the talking line; he’d not come here if he wor. It’s mostly the disappointed sort what goes a-slummin’; their insides is sort o’ empty, and we fills the bill better’n any, for misery loves company.”

“I’ll go next Sunday, if I remember when the day comes round, and if he tells where he holds forth,” Dapper Jim declared.

Ferdinand's visit, on the morning with which our chapter opens, fell on the following day. The way he was questioned by his friends in Clowne's Alley proved that their curiosity had outgrown their deference. There was great satisfaction when it was known that Dapper Jim was as good as his word, and as he picked his way gingerly along the narrow lane the following Sunday, dressed in a fairly decent suit to which every one in the Alley had been anxious to contribute their best of wearing apparel every individual sober enough to be on foot was standing about the doorways to cheer him. For those who had the satisfaction of seeing something from their slim wardrobe on the way to a fashionable up-town church, there came a new uplifting of heart; the tide was turning towards the flood, and some time they might go in person and hear their brother preach. There was withal a profound anxiety. If Dapper Jim came back with the word that Brother Ferdinand was not a swell preacher, but of the class previously described by one of their number, as possessed with empty insides, who go a-slumming to ease the aching void, words could not express their disappointment; indeed, the chances were that a general dram-drinking might ensue, to relieve their own aching void. The expectation was so keen that by half-past twelve men and women were gathered about the entrance to the Alley—anxiety and expectation depicted on their faces. A collection had been taken up that morning—fifteen cents being the amount called for. Ten cents were required for car fare, and a silver coin for the plate, for they would on no account

have Dapper Jim disgrace them by putting a penny in the collection. It was quite one o'clock when he came, and they were getting afraid that their agent, overcome by so much ready cash, and his Sunday garments, had fallen into some of the traps on the way, and had gotten himself intoxicated. He stepped out of the car with the air of a conqueror, and as sober as a judge.

"He looks as if the ground wa'n't fit for him to walk on," a woman remarked sullenly; she had contributed nothing to the trip and was, in consequence, a little jealous, but she followed the others as they crowded around him after they had got well into the Alley.

"Tell us from the beginning," some one cried.

"That I will. To begin when I got out of the car will do, I expect; there wasn't anything worth remarkin' on till then, only a lot of swells takin' their pleasure. When I saw Brother Ferdinand's church with the crowds pouring in, all dressed in their broad-cloths and satins, I was afraid they mightn't want me with them. I waited for a spell, and then I thought how bad you'd all feel, so I went in as bold as any of them. I wanted to get a good view of the preacher, and to hear what he said. A well-dressed young chap stood alongside of one of the doors leading into the middle of the church. He tackled me right away, and shook my hand and called me brother, and says he, as polite as if I wor the president, 'Shall I show you to a seat?' 'That's jist what I come for,' says I; 'I want to hear Brother Ferdinand.' 'Is he your brother?' he asked. 'He lets the hull lot of us in Clowne's

Alley call him brother ; women you'd not like to speak to except on the sly, and all sorts.' 'Will you tell me all about it after church?' says he. 'That I will and welcome,' says I. So we two went sailin' up to a seat, and before I had time to take things in, the organ began to play so's 'twould most make you cry, and right in the midst of it in walked Brother Ferdinand, and went to a little stand. He prayed for quite a spell, right there afore the hull lot of them, and all to himself, and then, when he'd got through and lifted his head, blest if he didn't look all around as if he was searching for some one, and that some one was me ; for when he saw me, he smiled jist the littlest bit, and gave me a look as much as to say, You're welcome in my house. Then he prayed out loud ; boys, it was a prayer ! I never felt so mean and nasty in all my life as I did then. And my ! can't he preach ? I'm no great judge, I'll allow, but if the preachers all talk like him, I'm not surprised they have so many to go to hear them. To make a long story short, the job was all through, singing and all, far sooner than I wanted, for while he talked I felt most equal to the millionaires a settin' around, drinkin' in what he said. I went out with the crowd, packed in with them so tight I could have got as many pockethankerchers as I wanted, but laws ! I couldn't a stole a thing there if I'd been a-starvin'. Some of 'em shook hands with me, and spoke that kind and brotherly I couldn't say much to them, but jist had to keep a winkin' and swallerin', for I might as well confess, I could a cried equal to one of them babies in your arms when its mammy is on a spree, and it's most a-starvin'."

As he paused, there was a general pressing of the long-suffering babes to the mothers' hearts. As never before they realised what it meant to the helpless little creatures when their unnatural mothers neglected them for drink. Continuing his narration, he said, "When I got atween the doors there was the young feller a-waitin' for me, and blest if I didn't tell him everythin', even to the borreyed clothes and the fifteen cents ; my heart was that tender I couldn't a been softer hearted if I'd been groggy. He was pleased enough to hear what his minister had been a-doin' all on the sly, but he told me not to let on to Brother Ferdinand that I'd told what he's doin' for us. I promised to go next Sunday, and he begged me so hard to take it, I've brought back your fifteen cents, and he gave me enough change for next Sunday. He told me to be sure and come every Sunday, and to bring as many as I could along with me."

"Is that all?" some asked.

"Well, it's all I can tell now, for I'm out of breath, and hungry besides. I found meetin' hungry work, and I sort of envied them rich fellows going home to their roasts and puddins', while I had nothin' to come to but taters and smoked herrins. If I keep on bein' a meetiner, I'll soon have a better Sunday's dinner than I have to-day. Here's your pennies : some one, maybe, can make the change."

CHAPTER XX

SEEKING ADVICE

THE usher to whom Dapper Jim had confided the secret of Ferdinand's work in Clowne's Alley, never rested until his circle of acquaintance had learned all he could tell on the subject. The following Sunday Dapper Jim was among the earliest arrivals at the church. He had an entire change of costume, which reduced to a marked degree the outward difference between him and the surrounding "millionaires." Ferdinand was so well pleased to have him at church that he had carried him an entire suit of clothes the previous week, while in the meantime he had waited with some anxiety for his appearance among the members of his congregation.

Clowne Alley had turned out that morning to a man to witness Dapper Jim's departure, some of them keeping sober the night before for the purpose; influenced to do so, it may be, by some fine instinct remaining in their hearts, although so much else had been lost. They were sure it would gratify Brother Ferdinand. It was his field day, and they would so far honour it as to keep sober. Some of them cherished the hope that some bright Sabbath morn-

ing they might accompany Dapper Jim to church. The name had been given to him in derision, his clothes since they knew him had been so ragged and unclean; it would seem that after this they would need to cast about in their vocabulary for a more suitable name.

Even the women in Clowne Alley were speculating among themselves as to the possibility of getting a Sunday costume, in which they might take turns in appearing among the fashionably dressed worshippers in their brother's church. Dapper Jim had assured them it was an excellent place to study the Paris fashions. If this were so, anything they might compass in dry goods would no doubt come short of the prescribed standard, but they comforted each other with the assurance that if Brother Ferdinand wanted them in his church, garments would be forthcoming—not a single suit merely, which by no possible means could be contrived to suit all of them, but suitable garments for each individual in the Alley. It was not long ere a hint of what was in their minds reached Ferdinand. He was ready to supply every man in the Alley with Sunday garments, since he knew this could easily be accomplished with trifling expense. Among his parishioners there were no doubt abundant stores of clothing lying unused, and which could be had for the asking. To do this for the women was a more difficult undertaking. Indeed, he had scarcely the courage to attempt it, and decided to make the necessary purchases himself. He was exceedingly distrustful of his ability to perform the work judiciously, but he had attempted

so many difficult enterprises in his life, he was not going to give up this time. He desired exceedingly to help these poor creatures, and he firmly believed one of the most effective means of accomplishing this was to restore their lost self-respect, and bring them under the influences of the preached gospel. There were no people in the city with whose sorrows and temptations he was so well acquainted, neither were there any for whom he had such deep sympathy.

At last he decided to consult with some lady member of his congregation, and to make choice of her at the next evening meeting. The hour arrived ; one of the first to take part in the prayer-meeting was Helen Cleveland. He listened attentively to what she said, but it must be confessed he paid more attention than was his custom to the garments she wore ; as he studied the general effect of her dress he decided she would form an excellent model for his womenkind in the Alley. The dress, made of some brownish-coloured cloth with hat and gloves to match, struck him as the very perfection of womanly attire ; he went over the inventory several times in his own mind to impress it on his memory for the next day's shopping excursion, when an inspirational idea seized him. Why not take Helen Cleveland into his confidence ? He could describe his women, and she could decide what was most suitable for them.

The following morning he called at the Cleveland mansion at such an early hour the butler was not only surprised, but somewhat disconcerted, for Miss Helen had not yet breakfasted ; indeed, it was among the possibilities that she had not left her pillow. A

maid was forthwith dispatched with the minister's card, and in a short time the young lady appeared in such a lovely costume, Ferdinand was amazed at the variety possible in feminine attire. He plunged at once into the matter that was perplexing him, Helen listening with such apparent interest he felt sure that his suit was won.

"I am so glad that you have come to me," she exclaimed when he had finished speaking. She did not tell him how flattered she felt to be the one selected for this delightful business.

"Could you come this morning to see my women?"

"I will be ready to accompany you, so soon as I have had my breakfast and changed my dress. Won't you join me in a cup of coffee? The time will not seem so long."

Ferdinand followed her to the breakfast-room. How pleasant it seemed sitting at that well-appointed table and sipping the delicious coffee, while the beautiful hostess talked with him on various subjects; and then, with a sudden blinding force that well-nigh overwhelmed him, Mrs. Cunningham's conversation came to him. In that brief revelation he discovered that it was possible to love more than one woman in a lifetime. But what disaster was following him? The first, and for many years the only woman for him, passed beyond his reach before he dared reveal to her how she had twined herself about his heartstrings; and now this same perverse heart of his, forgetting the love that had coloured his past, first with the rose-tints of hope, and then with the blackness of the funereal pall, had of itself gone out in the fulness of

manhood's matured strength to a girl possessed of great wealth, high social position, and brilliant parts, to whom the once ploughboy and factory operative might not hope to aspire.

His companion, noticing his sudden abstraction, tried the more to interest him ; wondering meanwhile what could have caused his face to cloud, when only a few moments before he had looked so happy ; but she was a wise young woman, pretty thoroughly versed in the wayward moods of young men, and contented herself with believing that the shadows would be dispelled when once they were among those beloved though grimy dwellers in Clowne's Alley, of whom she had already heard full particulars from Dapper Jim's friend, the usher.

Ferdinand was again surprised at the speedy transformation of this bright young creature, when she presented herself in a nun-like costume, after he had adjourned to the drawing-room, there to await her arrival.

"I decided to put on my plainest street dress," she said defensively, as she caught the surprised look on his face. "Is my dress too simple?"

"Oh, no; I was only thinking how swiftly you had metamorphosed yourself. In my opinion you would grace the Queen's drawing-room in that gown."

How soberly he spoke, almost sadly she fancied, as he turned away his eyes, and then followed her into the street. They changed cars a couple of times before they reached Clowne's Alley, the streets growing narrower and the buildings more desolate looking the farther they went. Helen had never gone

slumming before, save in the pages of fiction. The description and reality were as wide as the poles. To comprehend the brutalising effects of slum life, one must view it individually, rather than through the eyes of a novelist, no matter how cleverly realistic he may be. Women in such desperate straits in the matter of clothes had never been conceived of by her; wizened, heartbroken-looking babies, so dirty and ragged, her eyes filled with tears as she gazed on them; the men who were loitering about the doorways were so dreadful in their appearance, she shuddered and drew nearer to her companion for safety. He noticed her movement and whispered encouragingly, "You need have no fear; they all know, and I believe like me."

Entering the first house at their right hand, she involuntarily gathered up her skirts from the contamination of dirt everywhere. Ferdinand opened the first door, only waiting a few seconds after knocking. What a vision met her startled gaze! A man, deathly pale and greatly emaciated, was lying on some rags, with a quilt or two completing his scant yet filthy bed. A woman with a pinched, hungry face, clad in rags, was washing some battered dishes by a shelf of boards nailed in one corner. She turned towards them, her face instantly illumined by a glad smile when she saw Ferdinand, while she cried eagerly, "Oh, brother! you are so welcome! My poor man has come home sick unto death, I fear. He just had strength enough to reach here, and there he has lain ever since."

A baby was moaning weakly on another heap of

rags, which probably they called a bed, while two older children were trying shamefacedly to conceal their nearly naked bodies behind a barrrel.

"This is a dear friend who has come to help you," Ferdinand said, turning to Helen Cleveland.

Something in the intonation of his voice caused the woman to say—

"Is it your own dear wife, Brother Ferdinand? Someway we never realised that you were a married man, any more than if you had been a Catholic priest."

How deep the tint grew on the lovely face, as Helen turned swiftly away to hide the flush the heavily throbbing heart had caused.

"No, Mrs. Swim, I am not married."

"But you will be some day Oh! I think it would be like heaven itself to be your wife. I know you make this world seem an entirely different place to me. I have wished so much that my poor Bob could know you; and now that he has come home I fear it is too late for you or anybody else to do him any good. We have had the dispensary-doctor, and he says it is rapid consumption, brought on by exposure and bad rum."

"I will have a look at him."

Ferdinand was anxious to divert the conversation away from himself. He was never certain what Mrs. Swim might say; evidently she esteemed him at his full worth, and had no fears of inflating his pride by acknowledging her opinion. She was quite a fair scholar, and had seen better days, but a drunken husband had placed her among the lowest dregs of

the human race. He knelt on the grimy floor beside the poor dazed creature, whose earthly existence might now be measured by a few laboured breathings. Helen came and stood beside him, her eyes dim with tears."

"Is he going to die?" she asked presently.

"He is dying now; he has drifted, I fear, beyond reach of our voices."

"Oh, how dreadful! for he is not ready to die."

"Let us pray," Ferdinand said with deep solemnity.

Afterward, in describing that prayer, Helen said—

"You have never heard our pastor at his best; he should be heard at the worst possible juncture in the affairs of some poor wretch, to find what are his views of Christ's mercy. All the time he prayed that morning beside that poor struggling creature, it seemed to me that the Lord Jesus was standing beside us with the pierced hands held out in benediction."

It was long after midday when Helen reached home, thoroughly exhausted by the new and altogether surprising experiences of the morning. In no other place had her sympathies been so wrought on as in the Swim abode, but the degrees of wretchedness did not widely vary.

It was not garments meet for God's house alone that she promised to those bewildered folk, but food and household utensils.

"To think of the money I have wasted on trifles, when my brothers and sisters were starving here," she said with a shudder, as they left behind them the misery of Clowne's Alley.

"Only a drop in the great sea of misery is represented there," Ferdinand responded wearily. The poverty of this great city appalled him. "I confine myself to this one spot, believing it is wiser to do a little thoroughly than to cover a large area with work not half done."

"You will let me help you in your work," Helen pleaded, as she said goodbye at her own door.

"God alone knows how gladly I will accept your help. It will be as if done to my own kindred." He paused, and then added reverently, "It will be as if done to my Lord."

CHAPTER XXI

LIFE-WORK BEGUN

THE world she lived in became like a new creation to Helen Cleveland, when a work was given to her, so different from anything she had previously known. There was so much to be done, so many hearts to be comforted, that she straightway forgot the ennui that had made her days anything but a delight, as she tried to fill out the lagging hours with pursuits that left an aching void in her heart.

She began her work that very day. Scores of yards of dress goods were selected; durable worsteds of sober colours to be made into gowns for the women in Clowne's Alley; for cloaks, her own wardrobe, together with those of her acquaintances, were to be laid under tribute; among them all she was sure enough could be found for every woman in the Alley; for the hats and bonnets she meant to trust to her own taste, helped by the young women of her acquaintance. The cast-off millinery in their respective attics would supply them with abundant material. Her ready wit helped her to a plan that

she felt assured would find general favour among her girl friends. A morning was set apart for the work ; their pastor was asked to come and read to them, while all were invited to remain to luncheon. Each of the invited guests was in time on the appointed day, together with their pastor, who carried a volume of Amiel's Journal, a recent find in a book store. As the entries were brief, he could read an occasional paragraph between their periods of consultation over their work.

What an array there was of velvets and satins, laces and artificial flowers, poor dead birds, their joyous songs for ever hushed in order to cater to a cruelly depraved taste of womenkind, with the harmless ostrich feathers ; if youth and beauty are determined to go to the feathered bipeds for the wherewithal to heighten their charms, none can accuse them of cruelty if they place these in their hats. The work of construction proceeded slowly ; a few of the workers were deft-handed, while others had so little skill that small shrieks of pain punctuated the reading, as the needles punctured the flesh ; but they were all interested, those deficient in skill working under the supervision of the more gifted. As the bonnets were completed and laid on the work-tables, the appreciative air with which the workers regarded them was amusing to the reader, whose book had been laid aside, the paragraphs being too frequently interrupted. His eyes were as earnestly regarding the door, as theirs the work in hand. But he held his ground patiently : if they were generous enough to work for his women he would

sacrifice his day and remain with them if they so wished.

Some of the bonnets, even to his untrained perceptions, appeared sadly unsuited to those for whom they were intended. Gay flowers and feathers perched on tiny foundations of silk or velvet would ill assort with the sin-hardened faces beneath them ; but he wisely forbore criticism, both because of his ignorance in such matters, and fear of discouraging their new-born zeal.

Unused to such close attention to work, their energies began to flag before the required number of bonnets was completed ; but a few of them, notably Helen herself, persevered with the work until the luncheon bell rang, when nearly a dozen hats and bonnets were ready for their fortunate wearers. That afternoon the millinery was taken to Clowne's Alley. What a busy and exciting time it was ; each woman wanted to have the first chance to make a selection, and each individual among them wanted the gayest bonnet in the lot ; the more flowers and feathers the more were they coveted. Helen, who had accompanied Ferdinand, was a tower of strength ; he would have been utterly discomfited had he attempted alone to regulate the distribution.

The work was completed at last, more or less satisfactorily to the beneficiaries, who took their newly acquired possessions home for more careful inspection. The question of getting the gowns satisfactorily made was at first puzzling. The workers who had so cheerfully constructed the bonnets would stand aghast if asked to measure and fit these untidy

women, even if they had the necessary skill. Helen soon, however, had her plans all laid for this, as well as the other. The materials were entrusted to one of the women, who had neither husband or son, and was not likely herself to carry it to the pawn-shop, while Helen promised to secure some expert needlewomen, who would help them to make it up for them. The following morning at an early hour some half-dozen dressmakers walked into Clowne's Alley, where, for the next few days, the needles flew in and out of the sombre fabrics to such good purpose every woman had her dress completed by Saturday night. It must be confessed during the process of construction but little housework was performed in the Alley, while women who had well-nigh forgotten the use of needle and thread, if, indeed, they ever fully understood, developed a quite surprising degree of skill.

When Sabbath morning came there was an unaccustomed stir in the Alley. The few who possessed such necessary adjuncts to the toilet as combs, brushes, looking-glasses, were called upon to share them with their less favoured neighbours; there was a cheerful generosity manifested, and the goodwill that reigned in the place proved that poverty does not blight some of the nobler characteristics of humanity.

Ferdinand had made arrangements for receiving this addition to his congregation. He was by no means willing to relegate them to seats by themselves; the ushers were advised to conduct them well to the front, separated by judicious spaces, lest

they might think the regular worshippers were not willing to be near them.

Helen Cleveland and her fellow-workers awaited their arrival with amused expectation. How would their bonnets look on this strange array of woman-kind?

Ferdinand had provided car tickets for men and women alike. As for the collection, he assured them that for the present they would not be expected to contribute towards the funds of the church. Several of them, however, provided themselves with nickels, and when the plates were passed laid their offering along with the rest. As the office-bearers of the church walked down the aisles that morning after the service was ended, they congratulated each other on the excellence of the sermon, the best indeed their pastor had ever given them.

"It must have been inspired by his flock from Beggar's Alley. Did you ever see the like of that crowd in an up-town church?" Judge Carson enquired of a friend at his side.

"It reminded me of the promised millennium," the latter replied solemnly.

"Do you mean that period when we are told that the lion and lamb shall dwell together in harmony?"

"Not that, but something vastly greater."

The Judge did not press for further elucidation on the subject, his companion's tremulous voice and moist eyes warning him that badinage was out of place.

Contrary to his usual custom, Ferdinand left the platform hurriedly at the close of the service, coming

down among the people ; it was not his regular congregation he was seeking the opportunity to greet, but the poor, frightened-looking women from the slums, some of whom had not been in church for a score of years, some perhaps never before in their whole lives. Their eyes glistened with unshed tears ; the fine music, the beautiful church with its elegant crowd of worshippers, and more than all, the inspiring words of the preacher, which had seemed to be addressed directly to them, was like a lifting of the veil that conceals heaven from mortal view.

Was it not better for them than to be herded in some grim Mission Hall, clad in patched, unseemly garments? To escape from Clowne's Alley and make something better of life than they had planned was the desire of most of them. To accomplish this for their children if not for themselves was worth a hard struggle, and many of them were resolved on taking it. When some of his people suggested to Ferdinand that a Mission Hall might be erected within easy proximity to the dwellers in Clowne's Alley, he gave ready acquiescence, stipulating, however, that each and all of them, so disposed, must be accorded a hearty welcome in the Fayette Avenue Church.

Helen Cleveland was waiting in the vestibule to welcome the women, and beam hearty approval on the use they had made of the means provided to present a respectable appearance. The subdued manner in which they received their meed of praise touched her heart. To take them one and all to the nearest dining-room, and give them such a dinner as

they had not tasted for many a long year, was an impulse no sooner experienced than put in operation

As they proceeded to their grimy abodes that Sabbath afternoon, they each agreed that it was a day never to be forgotten in all future days that might come to them. Helen Cleveland's own stately dinner, presided over by an imposing butler, imported from across the seas, tasted all the better for the charity she had performed for love's sweet sake.

CHAPTER XXII

HAROLD AND HIS BRIDE

HAROLD BOWDOIN was coming to pay his adopted brother a visit, and he was not coming alone. A few months before he had been married, since then he and his bride had been in Europe; the close of their wedding trip was to be spent with Ferdinand in New York.

In their case money had wedded money, the bride bringing to her husband very many thousands of dollars. Harold had long since been admitted a partner into the law firm of which his father was head, but like many another in similar circumstances he had thus far taken life easily. The necessity for close application to business was lacking in his case, while his love for his profession was far from absorbing; hence it was not strong enough to draw him from other pursuits which had become like a part of himself. His humanitarian instincts had gone on developing since that far-away evening when Jimmie Wilson had acquainted him with Ferdinand's lonely condition. He had more interest in bright youths who were eager to make the best of themselves, than

in the litigation, and law business generally, that occupied his time when in the office.

To give himself up wholly to helping others, without fee or reward of any kind, save the satisfaction of seeing those whom he helped growing into noble characters, was to him an ideal pursuit. He looked forward to early retirement from business, when this should become his life-work ; but in the meantime he meant to keep his hand in, lest another Ferdinand Lee might be lost to the world.

They landed in New York late in the week ; he was anxious to meet his friend for the first time, immediately after hearing him preach. Together with his wife, he wended his way on the Sabbath morning to Fayette Avenue Church early enough to secure a favourable seat before the entrance of the pastor. Explaining matters to the usher he was conducted to a pew well up on the preacher's left-hand, on a side aisle where he could see with less risk of being seen.

The first arrivals after he had got seated was the deputation from Clowne's Alley. It was their second Sunday at church, and they were still considerably ill at ease amid their elegant surroundings. Harold watched them curiously, shrewdly surmising that they had been brought there through Ferdinand's influence. He anxiously awaited the gathering congregation ; he would be chagrined to find only a few persons there, to hear the preacher whom he had only been second in calling to this sacred office. The ushers were kept busy as the moments sped swiftly by, for the people were coming in crowds ;

it would seem half of them were visitors, from the movements of the ushers. At last every seat appeared to be filled, when the ushers began carrying in chairs for the aisles. It wanted only a few minutes to the appointed hour. Harold found himself watching feverishly for the preacher. What if there should be an exchange of pulpits that morning, and some stranger take his friend's place? He glanced down the long aisle nervously, wondering if he might not yet find out for certain where Ferdinand was to preach, and follow him, when his wife murmured softly, "Oh, there he is!"

He turned quickly to look just as a tall, stalwart man stepped to his place by the preacher's desk. What a change these vanished years had made in his adopted brother! And yet those were the very same deep-set, glowing eyes that had attracted him in that young people's meeting long years ago. The organist ceased playing, and the reverent, musical voice said, "Let us pray."

Harold's new-made wife noticed the tears falling from her husband's eyes. Certainly it was an unusual prayer, more eloquent perhaps than any she had ever heard, certainly unlike any. If the great God had been present in the unmatched glory that characterised His appearance as He stood on the sapphire pavement when He revealed Himself to Moses, Aaron, and the two-and-seventy Hebrews on Mount Sinai, the words could not have been more directly addressed or more reverently uttered. There was an overwhelming sense of the Divine majesty, with a marvellous assurance that the petitions would be

granted; there was also in the prayer a jubilant undertone, as if existence were a surpassingly rich gift, to be anywhere with God a rapture. He closed with the Lord's Prayer, which seemed to come directly from his heart, as if uttered for the first time. As she looked around on the congregation at the close of the prayer she was not surprised to see an expression of awe upon many of the faces.

"What a preparation for a sermon that prayer was!" her husband whispered over the hymn-book, as the organist played the opening bars for the song of praise.

"Your brother is wonderful!" was the enthusiastic reply, uttered softly, it is true, but loud enough for those nearest to hear, who looked with surprise at the person thus addressed, while they beamed approval on the speaker, whose appreciation of their pastor was so sincere.

They wondered could this be one of the Lee brothers from that remote farmhouse of whom they had heard Ferdinand speak, both in public and private; if so, his remarks had been very misleading, for this young man bore himself as if to the manner born, and that manner of no mean order. The sermon was perhaps nearly equal to the one he gave them on the previous Sabbath, since there had come to him fresh inspiration, moving his heart to its profoundest depths. Notwithstanding Harold's attempt at concealment, the keen eyes, given to critically surveying his congregation, had detected the luminous face of his friend with the fair-faced bride at his side. Old memories were stirred, years were swiftly reviewed

which bore fruit in his sermon. He preached longer than was his custom, but part of it was to one particular, towards whom the mere word gratitude but feebly expressed what was in the speaker's heart. In that brief hour Harold received the hundredfold reward for the trifling sacrifices he had made in those golden days in order to bring this noble soul into its full inheritance. Whatever luxuries he could have crowded into those months would seem in comparison with this as the small dust of the balance. Again there came through the same strong heart a new call for self-sacrifice. Of late he had been indulging in selfish ease, taking life's duties in a careless fashion, and spending his money in such a way that neither in this or any world could he hope to find any results worth mentioning. He made up his mind to go back to home and work with new purposes, with a different view of the responsibility of great wealth. He sat like one in a dream when the service was ended, scarcely observing the people who moved slowly down the aisle, until his wife touched him.

"Look, Harold, at these people going down the aisle now; they are different from the rest, and the preacher has been talking with them." After watching them a moment, she said wistfully, "How happy they look! as if they were ready to cry for very gladness and love! How tenderly he talks to them, paying little heed to the richly-dressed worshippers! Oh, is he not walking in the steps of the Christ of Bethlehem?"

The tears were standing in her eyes, but her face was radiant, for this grand man was looking at them, and how his eyes were shining, while the smoothly-

shaven lip seemed tremulous with strong emotion. He was near them now, just entering the pew, his back turned to his admiring friends.

"My brother!" What a world of meaning he threw into those two words as he placed his left arm around Harold's neck, grasping the two outstretched hands in his right. She stood quietly wiping her fast-filling eyes, not heeding the neglect from the two absorbed in each other. They did not speak, until presently Ferdinand turned to her, his face eloquent with pent-up emotion, and said, "This is the one you have written so much about; may I claim her as sister?"

"Oh! if you will only so honour me as to call me sister!" she said eagerly.

"The honour will be mine."

How reverently he seemed to regard her when Harold said—

"You are to dine with us to-day. I know your habits well enough to be certain you have nothing worth offering to us."

Ferdinand laughed lightly.

"My dining-room is rather noisy, and the bill of fare not first class, but nevertheless I would be glad to have you share a dinner with me; it would help you to be more thankful for your daily mercies."

"Your sermon to-day brought me up suddenly," Harold said seriously. "I saw how wasteful I have lately been of time and money. If this little woman will consent, my life henceforth shall be patterned after the Sermon on the Mount and the eleventh commandment. There shall be no more expensive

hotel bills. The lodging-house and public dining-room are good enough for you ; they shall be good enough for us."

"What will become of our grand hotels if all the world follows your example?"

"A good many millenniums will have passed, at the present rate of progress towards perfection among so-called Christian nations, before that time shall come. Our planet is still farther away from the Divine ideal than we can well understand ; but let us go to our Fifth Avenue Hotel and accept the good things there provided for us."

CHAPTER XXIII

GOOD RESOLUTIONS

THE week spent by Harold and his bride with Ferdinand was a memorable one in their spiritual history. As they¹ listened to the minute details concerning the different enterprises recently taken up by the Fayette Avenue Church, their purposes were strengthened to begin some such work in their own city. The ground had not been pre-empted by any one; whatever might be done would be a result of this visit to New York.

"How did you come to think of all these things?" Harold's wife asked when the story had been told.

"It was done partly in self-defence," was the honest reply. "I saw my own danger. People have been very good to me; in their innocence they are in the habit of saying a good many kind things that might better be left unsaid. I was in great danger of getting satisfied with myself and of settling down into a fashionable pastor, thereby risking not only my own future existence, but hindering many another from entering heaven's gate at last."

"You felt sorry for the poor people too," she suggested. It was more to her mind that her husband's ideal of human excellence should work for others for their good, and not for the reflex benefit that might thereby come to him.

"Oh, certainly. I saw their bitter need, but for a while I hesitated about plunging into those horrible depths. I knew, in part, what it meant—expenditure of time that I selfishly coveted for my own mental furtherance, a heavy drain on my sympathies, the mental equipoise unbalanced by close contact with vice in its coarsest forms—all these and other reasons held me back until I found my spiritual power was weakening, and then I yielded. I deserve little praise for the work, since I was simply driven into it by a force outside of myself."

"You were not disobedient to the heavenly voice," she said reflectively.

"Besides, I set over against my own loss the gain that might come to these slum-dwellers—little children with their mothers held back from misery here and hereafter, men besotted by sin, the filthiest product on earth, made clean through acquaintance with Christ. It was one of my hardest battles, but, God helping me, I conquered."

"What about your reading and study?" Harold asked. "I presume the poets are relegated to a back shelf?"

"Oh, no, indeed. I have four hours every day for myself independently of pulpit or pastoral work. My sermons are growing all the time—in the street cars, in the slums, at fashionable social functions, which I

take in as conscientiously as the rest. The rich have souls to be saved the same as the worst case in slumdom, and often harder to reach, I am sorry to say."

"Only four hours to cultivate mind and spirit. It is rather a poor fraction for yourself, I must say," Harold observed thoughtfully.

"I believe my own vineyard is better cultivated than if I gave all my time to the work, and I also believe one of the fatal mistakes for a minister is the too exclusive cultivation of himself."

"You should be very happy, Ferdinand."

"I am well content with my gift of existence. I am learning slowly that following hard after God can make even this life like a grand thanksgiving psalm. To do His will in all things places the crown on us here. We are not compelled to pass through the ordeal of death to secure God's best gifts."

"We shall begin our lives over again, patterning them after yours."

"Oh, no, not that. Take my blessed Ideal for yours—the Christ of unselfishness, of Divine pity; He will teach you to do what is best. There is no teacher like Him. We are all so differently planned. My way of working might not be best for you."

Harold was silent, but after awhile his wife said, with tremulous voice—

"We are going to spend very little money on ourselves, and give our surplus to help others make the best of themselves. You are doing that, and it will surely be safe to imitate you?"

"Your noble husband began to do this work long

ago; he alone made it possible for me to enter the ministry. In all the good I may ever accomplish he will be a partner; we will not know what his dividends will be for some millenniums, perhaps not until the final winding up of things on this planet. I often tremble when I reflect on the distance that may be traversed along the centuries before our influence will be fully spent. We are told in the Scriptures that God's covenant of mercy with one who is faithful to Him extends to a thousand generations; it is hard to conceive of a blessing following down a line for thirty thousand years. The work we may do this year may abide on the earth until then. Truly, we are purblind not to realise these facts more deeply, and square our daily lives accordingly."

"It will not be matter for surprise, Ferdinand, if you revolutionise the thoughts and work of many lives, if you talk like that from your pulpit."

"Facts are better than fancies or platitudes," was the quick reply.

"I enjoy looking back to that evening when Jimmie Wilson called, and pleaded your case. How plainly that shabby figure on the back seat comes before me, the wonderful eyes watching me with a mute appeal for recognition. And the evening you spoke to us first, and all that followed, crowned with this that we see to-day. It seems to me that no happiness that may come to me in heaven can exceed what I feel now in the reward you are bringing to me."

"But for you I would be a toil-worn worker in Wright's factory, or some similar establishment."

They had been walking together in a shady park, whither they had gone to have a quiet hour apart from the noise of the great city. The long, bright afternoons Ferdinand devoted to his friend. What an interchange of views they had on many subjects, chief among them the plans Harold was making for his future work.

"I am puzzled to know where to begin," he had remarked half despairingly. "Our citizens are, in the main, law-abiding and industrious; there are a few of the dissolute class, but perhaps they are no farther from heaven's gate than some who live in fine houses and fare sumptuously every day. Sometimes it seems to me the work of reform might better begin in the pulpit; our ministers get too much into the habit of contenting themselves with preaching a faithful sermon, working in the prayer-meeting and visiting the dying, instead of going at men and women singly, warning them of the results of a godless life. Men did that in other days, when to do so often meant martyrdom. I heard my father say, not long ago, that no Christian person, lay or clerical, outside of his own family, had ever spoken to him directly respecting his duty to God, or preparation for another world."

"That is certainly a terrible count against your ministers, and Christians generally, but it will not serve as an excuse for him when he comes to give up his account to God. He has Moses and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles, and the history of saints for nearly two thousand years," Ferdinand said solemnly.

"You might take as your work, trying to win the individual to Christ," Harold's wife suggested timidly.

"A most excellent suggestion," Ferdinand said heartily. "Personal appeal is a work open to all, I am grieved to say neglected by nearly all."

CHAPTER XXIV

A SUDDEN RESOLVE

THE farewells were spoken. Ferdinand stood on the wharf watching the steamer that carried away the friends whose presence had so brightened the past few days. A sense of loneliness swept over him, as the distance swallowed them from his sight. How happy they were with each other! He could not fail to notice that even his friendship, that once meant so much to Harold, had become a secondary thing with him. He turned suddenly away, and entering a Fifth Avenue car went direct to Helen Cleveland's door. He failed to heed the unseasonableness of the hour, or the abruptness of his request. To decide upon a course of action, with him, was equivalent to beginning it. If his suit were denied, he said to himself that henceforth he would make up his mind that other plans had been made for him by his Creator than the building of a home, with the solacement of wife or child.

The butler was taken by surprise, a second time, at the early visit. Helen came in eagerly; some new

and altogether delightful enterprise must be on foot as a reason for this unseasonable call.

"Is there anything wrong?" she asked anxiously, as she saw the expression on his face.

He paused for a few seconds, and then said hurriedly, "I have come to ask for myself. Will you be my wife, Helen?"

She turned exceedingly pale. He went to her.

"Forgive my abrupt question; I am new to this work. If I have asked for what you cannot grant, I will go away; some other man may do my work better in Fayette Avenue; the world is wide, somewhere I may forget, when I see your face no more."

He turned to leave the room. He spoke truly when he said he was new to the work; evidently it did not occur to him to press his suit. Helen's voice arrested him.

"I do not want you to go away." She spoke softly, but he heard the scarce audibly spoken words, and turned, coming swiftly to her side. What an expression of gladness glowed in those eyes looking down into the tender, blushing face!

"Have you considered what it means to me, your asking me to stay?"

"Yes, I have loved you all these months, but I was afraid you would not fall in love like other men, certainly not with me."

"Why, who else could I love but you? There is no other woman in the world for me."

He stood looking at her with a world of joy and wonder in the deep, glowing eyes. Could it be possible that this splendid woman was giving herself

to him for time and eternity, his other, better self for ever?

"Do you consent to become my wife, Helen, or do I misunderstand you?"

"If you wish me for your wife, yes." There was a merry smile on the lips that gave the decisive answer. "That is if you would like to make me your wife."

"If I would like! I have no language adequate to assure you of that."

"Then no one can answer it, for you can make a more judicious use of our language than any one I know," she said brightly.

"Can it be true that you give me this hand, the heart behind it, your blessed self, for my very own for ever?"

"It is true," she said with a smile, although her eyes were bright with tears. This man's wooing was a strangely solemn thing—the reverence with which he regarded her, the passion of love she read in his eyes touched her far more deeply than words.

As he walked down the street an hour later, the apple women and beggars he met on the way were surprised at the largeness of his gifts, and yet he had forgotten to speak of marriage; his cup was full, he did not care for further gifts just then from this great-hearted woman. He sat down in a shady park where little children, guarded by their nurses, were at play. Their merry voices did not disturb the harmony of his being. How busy thought was! Memory called up from the past scene after scene in his life, as he climbed upward step by step; to-day was the crowning time for all his successes. He closed his eyes;

the little ones, thinking he was asleep, played more quietly, but he was never more keenly sensitive to the visible world, or the invisible, as he spoke with God : soul to soul, thanking Him for this last, best gift. At last he arose. He had received so much to-day, it was only meet he should share his overflowing cup with others. He would go to his friends in Clowne's Alley, he would be strong to encourage the despairing.

CHAPTER XXV

SUNRISE COTTAGE

THE Mission Hall for the people in Clowne's Alley became an assured fact before the lapse of many months. Certainly such another had not been evolved from the inner consciousness of any slum-worker in the entire city before. It was a neat building with an annex, fitted up more like a cosy parlour, than the grim room usually set apart for religious worship for slum-dwellers. The building contained a large kitchen and dining-room. The remainder of the space was taken up with bedrooms and two large dormitories; in connection with these were bathrooms with abundance of hot and cold water, towels, soap, and clean nightclothes. It was a long step towards reformation when a man or woman accustomed to a filthy bed, or no bed at all, elected to work for one. Two meals a day were provided; the pilgrims who sought the shelter of Sunrise Cottage were sent out in the morning, their hunger appeased by a nourishing breakfast. A labour bureau was established whereby they could earn something towards paying their expenses, but it

was more for the purpose of teaching them self-respect, and to discover their special aptitude, in order to seek steady employment for them elsewhere. The evenings were devoted wholly to religious exercises, which often continued for hours when the days were short, and the evenings set in early. There appeared to be a continuous revival, while the way some of these rescued ones worked to save others was marvellous. Men came to the cottage intoxicated—“dead broke,” as some of them phrased it; some power, not yet tabulated by political economists, seized hold of them, transforming them at a bound, not merely into reputable citizens, but bestowing upon them a heavenly citizenship. The worshippers at Fayette Avenue became increasingly interested in the work; so much so, indeed, that they not only gladly subscribed the funds to carry it on, but themselves went down among these lost ones, working as earnestly as if their bread depended upon their success; grave doctors of the law, leading politicians, one-time society leaders, and the clerks and needlewomen, joining heartily together in the work that, no doubt, if Christ a second time visited our world, would be the kind He would attend to first. It sometimes happened that the flotsam of humanity drifting into Sunrise Cottage before long could give a clearer account of their relationship to God than some of these rich, decorous Church members.

“There is no need of having revival services in our church,” one white-haired member of the congregation remarked; “our people cannot get the genuine article more surely than down at Sunrise Cottage.”

"Yes," was the reply from one who was a frequent visitor there, "it is good to see men and women whose energies have been expended at the gambling tables, in the ball-room, and at the playhouse, working among those poor lost ones."

Ferdinand, who had been silently listening, said with a measure of regret, "All our young people have not been weaned from their mad pursuit of pleasure."

"It would be a miracle if they had. One must learn to be content with moderate success among the rich; you certainly have much to be thankful for."

"I have much to humble me. As I study the lives of such men as Bernard of Clairvaux, Savonarola, Martin Luther, and the host of great reformers, I am filled with dismay. They reformed thousands; I can reckon my rescued ones by the score only, yet souls among the rich and poor are perishing in vaster numbers now than at any period of the world's history. Our reformers are only half aroused."

"That is true," was the sober reply; "I am often puzzled to know what our status will be in ecclesiastical history, or in eternity."

"I would do more if I knew how," Ferdinand said humbly. "Sometimes I see visions and dream dreams; at times I am inclined to sever my connection with this Church, and go down into the slums, giving all my time to rescuing the lost, but then I remember that the rich are as precious in God's sight as the depraved, and my call to serve includes them."

"We won't let you go away from us. Besides, what would you live on?"

"I have thought of that : these thousands of dollars you give me as salary are every penny bestowed on others. I have managed for some time now to exist on wedding fees, and gifts that I receive over and above my salary."

"You don't say that you give away all that we pay you?"

"Yes, but I am ashamed that I mentioned it. Pray do not think that I was boasting. I have an unhappy fashion of thinking aloud : this must have been a case in point."

"I am glad you told me ; no matter how worldly the members of a Church may be, or how close-fisted, it gratifies them to know that their pastor is not so. We all felt certain that your economical habits were not actuated by a desire to hoard, but that you might bestow your gifts on others. We assuredly did not dream that you carried your mania for giving so far as to give away all your assured income."

Ferdinand smiled.

"I have had some fancies about the epidemic of marriages coming my way ; it has seemed like a Providence."

"We have been hoping to hear of your own marriage," was the quiet reply, to which no answer was vouchsafed.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MIRACLE OLD AS EDEN

IT was early morning, and a weekday too, but a vast crowd was collecting at Fayette Avenue Church, handsome equipages and richly dressed ladies in line with humbler vehicles and shabbily dressed men and women. Florists were still busy banking the platform and aisles with heavily perfumed flowers, but so eager were rich and poor to secure a seat where no seats had been reserved for favoured classes, that they were early on the ground. Every pew was crowded, and the aisles as full as the good-natured policemen would permit, and still it wanted half an hour of the allotted time for the marriage to take place, when the pastor was to take, for better or worse, the woman of all others with whom he wished to make the pilgrimage of life. What a look of expectation there was on many a grief-lined countenance from the slums, and what a vision of beauty that white-robed woman, in her veil of lace and flowers, was to these people who had never dreamed that one could look like that! They did not study closely the

costume, a marvel of satin and lace—the last extravagance of dress, the bride assured the bridegroom, that she would henceforth indulge in. The words were spoken making the twain one, amid breathless silence, while down many a furrowed cheek the tears flowed unheeded. There was in the face of the bridegroom, and the tones of his voice, a solemnity that thrilled his people's hearts; they could not know that it was the magnitude of God's gifts that well-nigh overwhelmed him.

And now the new-made man and wife were surrounded by their people, the aforetime tramp jostling the millionaire in his eagerness to grasp the hand that had rescued him, the coarse gown of the needlewoman brushing against the satins of society leaders. How many of these toilers from the slums were in the church that day, snatching an hour from their work to behold the happiness of the man who had been more than all the world beside to them! What wistful glances were bent upon the radiant bride by eyes that had watched for the pastor's coming to the desolate places they called home, as the one brightness in their ashen-hued lives! Was it possible that in heaven itself they could ever be so blest as she was, standing there in all her beautiful young womanhood, crowned with this man's love? Strange that human lives are set in such strong contrasts. There must be a world where averages are more evenly struck. Oh, for the patience to wait trustfully for that blissful time!

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